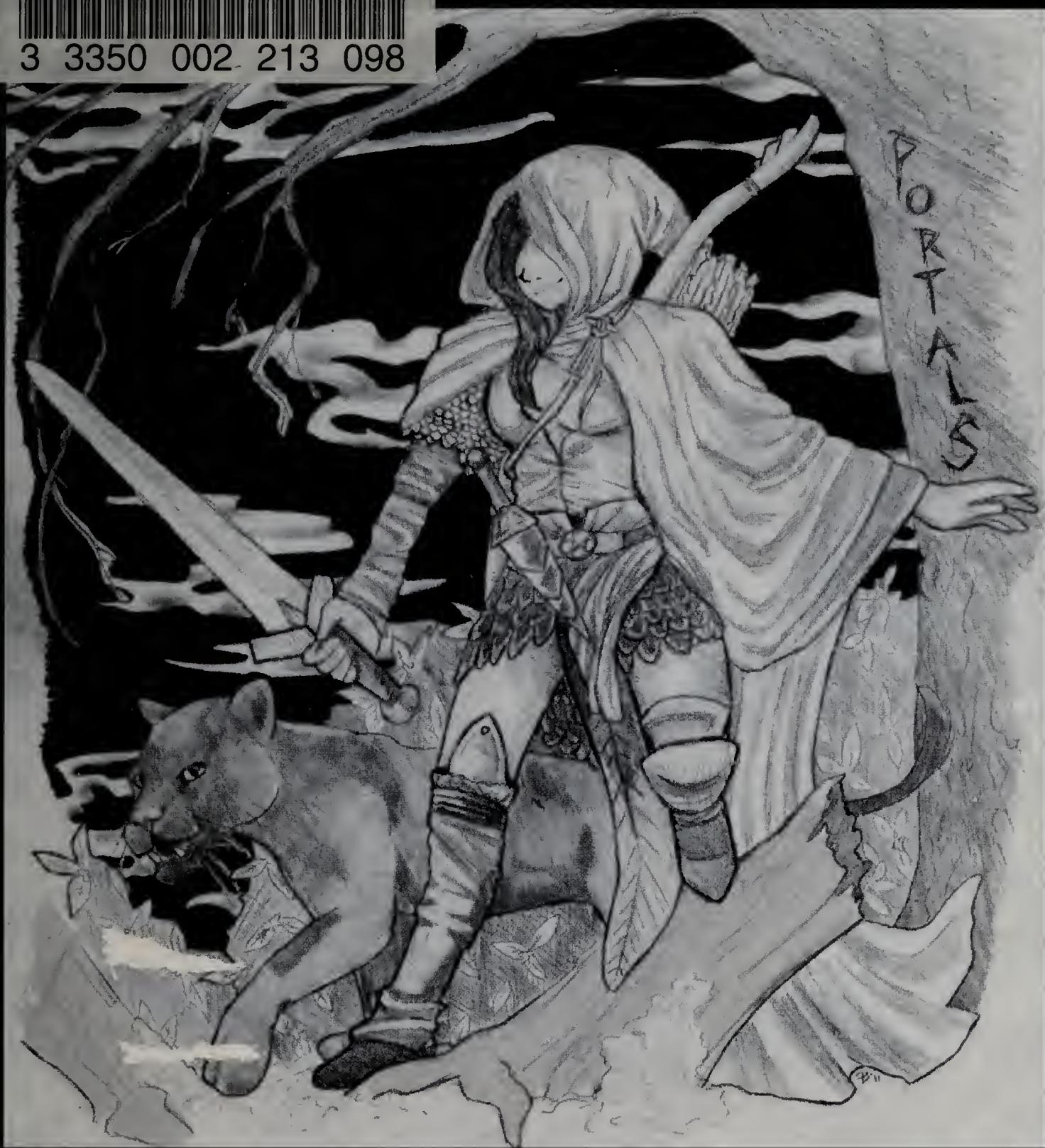




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Portals

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Creative Non-Fiction

Christina M. Fall
Hilary Lynne Jordan

Food Fight

The Bananas were at it again.

It didn't matter how many casualties they suffered; at some point their ranks would be refilled and the war would continue. They were resourceful, as well as resilient, though you might not think so when you first see them all innocent and yellow, peering up at you, huddled in bunches like shy little children behind their mothers. Something about their manner tugged at your heart strings. There was a whimsical cuteness and simplicity to their nature. The Bananas were far from the perceived shy and adorable fruit—they were a terror of the Produce Platoon, their numbers overwhelming, and more than ready and willing to stab you in the back when you least expected it. One would assume that they were the masterminds behind the entire battle. You would be mistaken.

There was one fruit that was even worse. Like little, round, blue ninjas, if not properly restrained, they could hit the floor and, with some sort of gravity-defying skill, they would keep going and not stop until they had wedged themselves tightly into irretrievable places, only to mold up and die. They were the Kamikaze warriors of the fruit kingdom, ready to die for the chance at victory, and their ambition rubbed off onto the other fruits, filling them with some sort of martyr-like pride.

The Apples were daft and absorbed the Blueberries' motivational speeches like a sponge of infinite proportions (particularly the pliable McIntosh). The Lemons and Limes, with their sour attitudes, were more than willing to let the Apples line up and be the first to fall at the earliest signs of impending attack. It's not that the Lemons and Limes were pessimistic; they just had a bit more sense than to be in the front lines.

Those two were the silent kids at school, always stooped in a corner together planning, something between themselves. They were bullied and belittled by their peers, who were much larger than they were. The Grapefruit (often calling themselves Greatfruit instead) of course would insist that they were faultless in their actions, that the Lemons and Limes somehow started it and they were persuasive in their words. They were the future politicians and world leaders, even hiring the Oranges to be bodyguards, but in the end, they were next in line behind the Apples to fight. They were really just sheep, too, suckered by the Blueberries' promises and charming disposition.

The Lemons and Limes grew up to be the scientists and learned to fight behind the lines. They didn't want to die so they devised means to better defend themselves by utilizing advanced weaponry. Pineapples were much like grenades. They were sharp and deadly, poking and biting anyone that would get too close. The Lemons and Limes spent most of their time determining the best methods to use these traits in battle. After the gruesome Pineapple War, defenses were created to protect against Pineapple attacks, and the Lemons and Limes had to resort to chemical warfare—Kiwis (or Che-Wa, as they called it) were perfect for this, with their over-abundance of tiny brown fibers that, when shed, would cause anyone to break out into terrible rashes. And if the stuff were inhaled, death by sneezing was very likely.

The Vegetables were a bit different. They were brawny more than brainy. Of all their ranks, their greatest assets as far as numbers went, which were still poor compared to the sheer amount of Bananas and Apples, were Potatoes and Onions. They made the bulk of the vegetable army. But where they lacked numbers they made up for with their stench. A bad Onion could take your breath away. A bad Potato could knock you unconscious in a matter of seconds. There was a saying amongst the Apples that they couldn't all be judged if one of them went bad. This was not true for the Potatoes whose influence, if one turned out rotten, quickly tainted the rest.

It was a bit more difficult for the Vegetables, overall, to fight in the war. Most of them relied on a special environment for survival. They required a cool, moist place because their bodies couldn't retain water well. They also had a much shorter lifespan than most, with the exception of the Carrots, who were too stiff and stuck up to care about anyone but themselves, let alone to share the secrets of longevity. Yet, the Vegetables somehow managed to contribute in some manner and help the Fruits keep the infectious breads at bay.

It is no secret that the Bakery Battalion has long envied the Produce Platoon's position as the most attractive and colorful. They have denied they feel this way, but you can tell. They paint themselves with pretty pastels, sprinkling on layers of sparkles to try and attract anyone to them. They drizzle themselves with chocolate and vanilla in hopes that passerby will be sucked into their evil plot of destruction.

The Bakery Battalion's nature is no secret. They are unhealthy and cruel, preying on the weak-minded. Even some of the weaker Vegetables and Fruits have been brainwashed by their trickery, only to meet an untimely fate—carrot cake, potato bread, lemon custard donuts, blueberry paczki, apple pie and many, many others.

But there are those that feel that the Bakery Battalion's actions are justified. How long did the world just run around and stomp on them? Experiment on them? Torture them? They have been pounded, drowned, baked alive, twisted, cut, and fashioned into some hideous creation no longer resembling what they had once been. Oh, yes. It is not well known that the unfortunate souls of the Bakery Battalion had once been Vegetables and Fruits until genetic modification and advanced sciences ultimately forced them to their downfall, how they longed to return to their original state before the Demons with feathers and udders approached them and gave them what they dubbed "The Sickness"; it destroyed their peaceful existence and turned them into crazed zombies. Bitter resentment is all that remains in the minds of the Bakery Battalion when they were cast aside as unfit and thrown into isolation much like a leper colony. Yeast was taboo to the Produce Platoon. Nobody talked about it. And if you had it, you might as well have no longer existed.

The Bakery Battalion hated the Produce Platoon, but not so much as the bringers of The Sickness. While they fought the Fruits and Vegetables for their unjust discrimination toward their kind, their ultimate goal was destroying the Dairy Demons and getting back at them for what had happened so many years ago.

Those in the Bakery Battalion were cunning and secretive. They knew it was

futile to engage openly in battle with the Dairy Demons, for they would be sure to be wiped out with some strange disease. A secret war was engaged, a war of information and espionage. The Crackers would go undercover and join the Cheese, and the Cookies would manage to soak up information from the Milk then report back to Headquarters—via the Reduced Cart where the older feeble Cakes, Cookies, and Breads nearing the ends of their lives would go into hostile territory with one last attempt to prove themselves useful to the Cause.

The Dairy Demons were not stupid by any means and were well aware of the actions of the Bakery Battalion. They would send their own out in retaliation. Whipped Cream would pretend to be frosting and take the Cakes by surprise. The Butter would use more provocative means and butter up the Breads. Ice cream would freeze themselves into the form of Cakes and spy on the Pies.

Nowhere was safe. No place remained that was untouched by the War. From the arctic regions of the Dairy Freezer Section to the hot recesses of the Bakery Ovens, insanity resided over the Grocery Side of Wal-Mart.

Seasons of Love

The last time I saw my grandpa alive was on July 4th, 2007. My maternal grandparents were celebrating my parent's 25th wedding anniversary at my uncle's house in Wanatah. Grandpa was in his middle 60s. Due to the hard life he had lived as a young man, he looked like he was in his late 70's. He was stoop-shouldered and walked with the help of a cane. All those years of drinking, working in the mill, injuries, and surgeries had taken a toll on him. I was dealing with feelings of annoyance that evening. I was feeling insecure of my position as a grandchild, a childish insecurity that refused to be resolved. My grandpa could tell I was upset, and he called me over to him. Even though I was 17, he pulled me onto his lap like he used to when I was a little girl. He whispered into my ear, with that slight southern drawl he had, and said, "You know you are still grandpa's special girl and that I love you. Don't you ever forget that." I gave my grandpa a hug, and he gave me a small handful of butterscotch candy, which was my favorite. A little bit later, our family left to return home. I was supposed to go visit my grandparents later that week, but I could not get off work. I then had to show my dog at the Porter County Fair, which was an exhausting, yet very rewarding, task. If only I had known what was coming a few weeks later, I would have done things differently.

July 27th, 2007, is a day that definitely earned first place on my "Worst Days Ever" list. It totally beat out the time I was stuck in an elevator with 15 people for about ten minutes, but that is another story. This day had started out foggy and a little chilly. I had gone to a few yard sales with my parents, enjoying the last few hours I had with them. My sister would soon be returning from her mission's trip. I always covet time alone with my lovely parents. By 10am it had turned into a beautiful day. The sun was shining, and there was a slight breeze in the air, which tempered the July heat into perfect weather for attending the fair. I had just finished taking a career placement test at Purdue North Central (PNC), a local college near my home. In about a month, I would be starting my much anticipated senior year in high school, and I still didn't know what I wanted to study, hence the taking of the test. I was waiting outside one of the buildings at PNC for my mom and dad to pick me up. We were planning on attending a local county fair. Right up until now I felt I was at the best part of my life; however, that would change when I saw my dad's truck pull up and I realized there was no mommy in the front seat. With some slight concern gnawing in my tummy, I walked to the truck with a smile on my face and asked Daddy if Mommy was coming with us. We were supposed to go to the fair right away! Daddy said no, and told me to get in the truck. My father's normally smiling face was serious, and it seemed as if in those few hours he had aged several years. Then, as he turned to me, I saw something I had never seen before. Tears began to well up in his big, blue eyes as he told me, "Honey, your grandpa is dead."

Grief's icy hand gripped at my throat. My heartbeat suddenly grew louder in my ears. I wanted to scream out, but the rational/selfish part of me calmly asked "Are you serious? How and why?" Daddy proceeded to tell me that my beloved grandpa had done the unthinkable: he had committed suicide. He then told me we were going

to my grandparent's house right away to be with the rest of the family. Suddenly, the day that had started off so beautiful and perfect seemed to be almost mocking me with its peacefulness. Anger welled up inside me as I drove with my daddy to Wanatah. I had to call my friend who we were to meet at the fair and, between sobs, tell him I couldn't come and explain why. He was very sympathetic and told me to call him later when I felt up to it. Angry, selfish thoughts flew through my head. I had wanted to go to the fair with my friend. My selfish thoughts were my mind's way of not acknowledging or accepting what had just happened. I was in complete denial. After I hung up, Daddy gave me the whole story of what had happened today while I was taking that test.

My mom had called my grandparents around lunch time, while my dad was dropping me off at PNC, to tell Grandma about a job she had just been offered. My mother had just spoken to my grandfather the night before, and knew that he and grandma were addressing a conflict. While on the phone with my grandma, my grandfather stepped into the room with a gun pointed at his head. In a split second, our world was changed. My mother had to listen helplessly to her father's last words before he pulled the trigger. My daddy returned to find my mother, stunned and traumatized, calling 911. Within minutes my parents were on their way to attend to my grandmother. They my dad came and picked me up, bringing us to the present. After my dad finished telling me some of the details, I spent the rest of the drive silently reflecting on their life together.

My grandparent's appeared to have had a rocky marriage. They were from poor areas of Virginia, and both were children of coal miners. My grandpa had told me stories of his hell raising years as a young man, and of his addiction to alcohol. He always made sure he never drank in front of us grandkids, but it took a toll on his relationship with his other family members. Regardless of all stories and misunderstandings, every time I would come over for a few days, both grandparents would exclaim how wonderful it was to have me over.

Many of my summers growing up were chock full of spending the night at their house. We watched old black and white westerns (Grandpa always had them on), and we listened and danced to bluegrass music. A few days after every visit, I would get a letter in the mail from grandpa telling me how proud he was of me, and how special I was to him and Grandma. Looking back now, I am happy I saved all those letters. Grandpa and I had a very special relationship. I would spend hours in the pole barn with him building or fixing things, and afterwards he would drive me down to the Dairy Queen at the stoplight and we would get Dilly Bars to bring back to Grandma. He was the one who let me drive the pick-up truck in their backyard for practice before I got my license. I will always treasure those memories.

By the time Daddy and I got to the house, the coroner had finished cleaning up the area and had already left. I was spared having to witness my grandfather coming out in a body bag and being put into the vehicle like my cousins did. I had no more tears to shed that day. I felt numb inside. My mind refused to accept what was going on. I pushed my grief deep down, and I kept myself busy by making coffee and tea for the people who came over to offer comfort to us.

The beautiful weather continued as people kept coming in. I suddenly became very grateful for all of my family. There were so many people that came to their house that day. Most of those people weren't even family, but friends, neighbors, or people who had known Grandpa.

After the funeral, I was having monthly nightmares about my grandpa. Most of them surrounded my graduation. I would see myself walking to receive my diploma, and he would be there in the audience smiling and cheering me on, and then disappear afterwards. The days after the funeral, and the months continuing, I showed very little emotion. I only felt anger. I continued to bottle up my emotions and push them down. I started my senior year in high school. The people who I thought were my friends all stopped talking to me. They didn't know how to help me deal with my grief. I felt so alone and angry. I was angry at my grandfather because he hadn't stayed around to see me graduate from high school. I was angry at how he died. I was angry at the people who I thought were my friends but had abandoned me, just like he did. After about three months of this, my parents made me sit down and talk about how I was feeling and why I was avoiding everyone. After several weekly talks with my parents, I became more open about things, and was more eager to help other family members with their grief, because a grief shared is definitely a grief softened.

I used to be exasperated with all of my family, not liking that we were so closely knit. After grandpa's death, I learned what the real meaning of family was all about. The day after he died, family from Texas, Arkansas, and Illinois came to be with us and comfort us. They left their jobs and responsibilities to stay with us about a week after the funeral. I realized how much this family of mine really loved each other. Even though we got on each other's nerves a lot, we were still a family. They say that you know who your real friends/ family are when the bad times hit. The real friends/ family are there for you, they offer a shoulder to cry on, and an ear to listen to your grief. My family proved that fact.

Because of the tragedy that struck my family, not only is my mom's side of the family closer, but my dad's parents have grown closer to us as well. They saw how one action can change the dynamics of a family, and we see them a lot more often. Our family truly knows how to pull their act together when they need to. Yes, we still get on each other's nerves, but that is because we aren't perfect. Still, we love each other and we know that we are always there for each other no matter what.

Academic Essays

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River of Blood

“Eat an American champion!” This was an advertisement a French restaurant used to entice patrons to come in and enjoy a slice of the 1986 Kentucky Derby Champion, 1987 horse of the year, Ferdinand. Although the circumstances that surrounded the demise of such a great horse are, to say the least, heartbreaking, one good thing did come out of it: it opened America’s eyes and brought the controversial issue of American horse slaughter to the forefront (Marquez). The overpopulation of America’s much loved horses and what exactly to do with them has been the cause of a passionate and heated debate for years--not just between government agencies, but with horse lovers everywhere. The final closure of America’s horse slaughter plants in the beginning of 2007 was thought by many to be the magical cure all that was supposed to end the slaughter practice and to protect America’s horses from cruelty. Instead, the closure of the slaughter houses only put the issue out of sight and out of mind for many when the stark reality of the situation is horses have it worse than ever and America’s dirty little secret isn’t just knocking on our door, it’s banging on it. If the slaughter of our horses is going to happen, it’s time to face the facts. We as a nation owe it not just to ourselves, but to our horses to face reality and to deal with the issue instead of sweeping our problems under the rug so we can sleep better at night while the horses pay the ultimate price for what we as a society have caused. The reopening of U.S horse slaughter houses is a hard pill to swallow for many, including myself but at least for now until we can find a realistic and achievable solution to deal with the root of the problem, massive over breeding, it’s what must be done. Reopening the U.S slaughter houses and requiring all horses that are to be slaughtered are done so domestically is the only humane option to fully protect and regulate the treatment and welfare of the horses that face such a heartbreaking end.

As of 2005, America had over 9.2 million horses that we know of; of those, 167,000 either passed away or were euthanized, and a staggering 112,000 were slaughtered in that year alone. Two years later, 138,000 horses were sent to slaughter (Lenz 254). When the U.S slaughter houses were officially closed in the beginning of 2007, the number of horses exported to Mexico rose 254 percent in just four months (Gone South) and that is where there is a major problem. Currently, horses are mainly being exported to Canada and Mexico to be processed. When we had our own plants open, we were able to set various rules and regulations on the care and method used to humanly slaughter horses. Now, once they leave U.S soil anything can and does happen to them.

There are two major methods that are used when slaughtering a large animal, such as a cow or a horse. The first and most widely used is a penetrative captive bolt gun. A bolt gun is placed in the center of the forehead and when the trigger is pulled a four inch metal spike shoots out and instantly kills the animal. The other method, and the one widely used in Canada, is the use of a fire arm which is fired at an area located on the head of the animal. Although these two methods seem gruesome, when done properly they instantly and humanly kill the animal. If the horses being sent to slaughter are lucky, they will end up in Canada; unfortunately, over half of

them are not so lucky and are instead sent south to Mexico, where the third and most horrific form of slaughter is practiced. It has been widely known that Mexico uses the puntilla knife (a small sharp knife that severs an animal's spinal cord) when slaughtering animals- and horses are no exception. The process of slaughtering in Mexico is as follows: Horses are placed in a large pen where they are forced in to a narrow chute that leads to a steel door (opening of the slaughter house). The metal door is opened and a single horse is forced through the door, into a small box like structure, by the terrified horses behind it. Once in the box, amongst cheers from employees, the horse is stabbed several times in the back until its spinal cord is severed. The horse drops to the floor from the paralyzing wound and then has to endure more torture as the slaughterhouse employee repeatedly stabs it again, this time in the neck, right behind the ears, paralyzing the animal higher up so it can't thrash its head around. When the animal is fully paralyzed but completely conscious, chains are placed around its back legs and it is drug from the box and hoisted in to the air. While it is hanging upside down and alive the horses throat is slit causing the animal to bleed and die. The process then repeats itself and the door opens dooming yet another horse to a horrific end.

Another major issue with slaughtering our horses outside of the U.S is the inability to regulate the care and shipping standards that ultimately affects the overall welfare of American horses. Unlike the U.S, Mexico has very few rules and regulations concerning animal health and safety. In terms of the slaughter business the feeding, care, and transport of animals comes at a loss of money. If one isn't required to feed, water, or give animals proper space and rest during transport, why would they? The bottom line is the more horses in a trailer, the less food they're given, and the least amount of stops that are made are equal to a higher margin of profit- profit that comes at a great cost to the horses that are destined for slaughter. Double deck trailers, outlawed in the U.S for transportation of horses, are used by slaughter houses outside the U.S because they can transport a greater number of animals despite the fact they do not allow an average horse to fully stand up in. Also, aggressive horses are placed tightly together to increase shipping numbers, which results in a high number of serious and painful injuries. In recent studies, horses that travel more than twenty-eight hours in warm weather can lose up to 10% of their body weight, resulting in a high level of dehydration. In addition, 15% of horses transported for over twenty-four hours were judged unsuitable for further transportation, due to weakness and high body temperature, and 29% were injured in double deck trailers (or possum belly), as opposed to 8% in single deck. Finally, a total of 30% of horses arriving to slaughter had visible wounds, which ranged from bite wounds to compound fractures or loss of limbs; of that group, 8% had serious welfare issues such as emaciation (Houpt and Waran 208).

It's a hard fact to accept but the U.S horse slaughter industry did generate money for America's economy. Even though America doesn't currently eat horse meat, many nations do; and because of this, horse slaughter is a bigger business then most people may think. In this day and age, with a shortage of jobs and the shaky stability of the current economy, any legal revenue helps. In 2002 alone, the sale of U.S horsemeat generated \$26 million (Ahern et al. 9). After the final closing of horse

processing plants in 2006, the prices for horses being sold to slaughter decreased in most cases by half. For instance, a horse that sold for 40 cents per pound now only nets between 10-20 cents per pound. This drop in price, directly related to the U.S ban on horse slaughter, actually caused more horses to be sent to slaughter because it became financially cheaper to send the horse to slaughter instead of euthanizing it. Today, the average cost of euthanasia is \$350-\$500, or you can auction your horse at a short sale (in most cases horses sold at this type of event end up going to slaughter) for around \$200. For many people, it's an easy choice because they can actually make money, in fact 74 percent of horses sent to slaughter are perfectly healthy riding horses (Lenz 253). It's also important to note that horse owners don't just sell their horses at short sales to avoid the cost of euthanasia. Most horse owners that sell their horses do so because they can no longer afford to care for them. Whether they are aware that most horses sold at short sales end up being slaughtered remains unknown. If we are going to slaughter our horses, it makes sense to do it in the most humane and money conscious way possible, and exporting horses out of the country accomplishes nothing except creating more problems.

Some people would argue that instead of reopening the slaughter houses in the US and requiring all horses to be slaughtered domestically, it is best to have a complete ban on the slaughtering of horses, meaning no horse originating in the US could be slaughtered or sold to be slaughtered. While this is a great notion and something I would personally like to see in my lifetime, it is far from realistic. We currently have a massive overpopulation of horses, a population our government can't support. The average cost to support a horse, not including vet care, is around \$1,800 a year; if we take that number and multiply it by 112,000 (the amount of horses slaughtered in 2005), it would cost the U.S government \$201,600,000 per year to care for all the displaced horses, and that's not including the amount of new horses added to that total every year. Another thing most people haven't considered is the fact that America is a major producer of horsemeat and, although we may not necessarily eat it, a lot of developing countries do. One can't completely cut a food out right away without drastic complications and repercussions. We, as a country, have to start relatively small and accomplish tackling the problem this country has with over breeding first before we can even begin to consider a total ban on horse slaughter.

America is currently at a crossroad in history. We have always been a leader as well as a role model for many nations. Every country has made mistakes along with progress throughout time. It is time for America to face the facts of what has become of our national treasure and what ultimately lead it there in the first place. Our horses are our responsibility. Although the shutting down of U.S slaughter houses in 2007 was done for good reasons, the end results of those closings was not what was intended. Turning a blind eye on a problem that was made worse by our own actions is not a solution--it's flat out denial in its cruelest form. It may be too late to help Ferdinand, but we owe it to the rest of our horses that face such a terrible fate to undo the terror and cruelty they are destined to experience if we, as a nation, do nothing. As stated in the proverb, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again," and that is something we must do: try, try, again until we get it right. We may not be

capable of stopping slaughtering now, but we are able to control the care our horses get and the way they ultimately pay the price for our mistakes. It's never too late to right a wrong or make a change for the better.

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True Cost of Organics

Since becoming a mother over eight years ago, I've taken a different look at what we put into our bodies. I certainly don't want to feed my children chemicals and preservatives. This brings to mind the question of how to obtain the best organics and what the cost of this lifestyle might be to my family and to society as a whole. In reading the Sept 11, 2006 edition of *The Nation* I came across a few articles that brought this issue to light. Liza Featherstone, author of "Wal-Mart: Mean or Green" speaks of resources, both financially and ecologically, being wasted on the transport of organics around the world. She also mentions the ramifications that big businesses offering a larger organic product will have on small organic farmers. In "Organic Farms: Hard Labor" Felicia Mello helps us understand the toll taken on the mostly immigrant employees who work in the fields and processing plants for large organic food suppliers. In "How Does Harlem Eat" Mark Winston Griffith discusses the lack of available fresh, healthy food to poor communities and the impact this has on the health of the low income population. Both Featherstone and Mello agree that the expansion of the organic market is taking its toll in a big way on America as a society. On the other hand, Griffith seems to hope that this expansion will bring the organic food market deeper into low income, racially diverse areas. These articles made me analyze my thoughts and experiences with organic food and the whole movement toward leading more environmentally friendly lifestyle.

According to Featherstone, Wal-Mart is offering more and more organic foods and keeping the prices low. There are many problems with this though. They are not using local farms as suppliers which equates to the use of a large amount of resources in transportation. This also opens up the possibility of putting small local farmers out of business. Big stores like Wal-Mart will cause an increase in demand. In turn, farmers will up production to meet this need and then there will be too much supply. Much the same way farmers struggled financially leading up to and during the Great Depression.

Another cost to be considered is one of a humane nature. According to Mello, low paid immigrant workers tend and harvest much of California's produce, both conventional and organic. Just because organic farming is better for the environment does not mean that it is better for the workers. They may not have to work with the chemical pesticides anymore but they do have to do the weeding by hand and on their knees. This is a very physically demanding job. Most organic farm workers make minimum wage or not much higher and usually only work for half of the year. Because of their economic position they can't afford to eat the organic food that they work with. The poor communities where most of the organic farm workers live do not even have access to organic food. Griffith even shared that "Low-income and nonwhite communities in general had fewer natural food stores and fresh produce markets. (Griffith, 38)" A big problem that comes from this fact is that "one-third of African-American and Mexican-American women are obese, compared with one-fifth of white women. (Griffith, 38)" This obesity difference has largely to do with the availability of fresh, whole, natural and therefore healthy food.

The reality of the business side of organic agriculture must also be brought into the equation. Farmers have to produce in large quantities to compete with the big businesses. This requires paying workers the lowest amount possible and offering little to no benefits. There are packaging, processing and transportation costs that also come into play. Most of the American public think just buying organic is a great environmental help and that's all that matters. This cannot be true as is shown in these the three articles. The American public needs to be more aware of the food crisis in this country. I am an organic buyer myself and this type of article is a great informational need. I think a big push needs to be made to not only eat organic but to eat locally grown produce, dairy, meat and eggs. Farmers markets and CSAs are becoming more and more popular as people realize the waste produced by big business organics.

I never really stopped to think about where organic produce that I purchase for my family comes from. I do like to shop at farmers markets and directly at the farms but this was certainly not a priority of mine. I had no problem purchasing my organics at big grocers or even Wal-Mart. I understood animal cruelty and knew to shop for free range meats and eggs but never stopped to consider a humane issue with produce. Now that I have learned what workers go through and how many resources are wasted in packaging and transport I will be much more conscientious of where my family's food comes from.

It is my opinion that Americans as a whole need to become more educated on the food industry. Most of the people that I know are already moving toward a more organic and ecologically friendly lifestyle. I personally have begun making many of my family's meals from scratch with organic whole foods. I have also done away with nearly all disposable paper products in my home. My children now take waste free lunches to school. Anything I can do to try to preserve the earth for future generations is worth my effort. Eating whole and organic isn't enough on that side though. We must learn to eat locally too. I guess I always knew that it was better to eat locally in order to save on oil and pollution but these articles really drove that home for me.

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The Power of Her Significance, The Significance of Her Power: An Analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

Women in the 1950's, as seen in articles and pieces taken from that time period, were often submissive to men, particularly in the media. Typically, a woman would stay home, clean, cook, have babies, and raise the family while men went off to earn a living. Women were, without a doubt, financially dependent on men. This, unfortunately, made women appear dependent on men in quite a few aspects. In Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, however, we see quite the opposite effect in Humbert Humbert's relationship with the young, not-so-lovely, *Lolita*. While most young ladies from the 1950's are submissive, polite, and proper, *Lolita* is often rebellious, powerful, and demanding during several different situations in the novel.

The reader's first thought while reading *Lolita* is most-likely something along the lines of "Lolita, and innocent little girl, as the victim of a sick and perverted man." As M. Gigi Durham states in his piece "The Lolita Effect: Sexy Girls in the Media," "In truth, she [Lolita] was raped and victimized." Durham further explains, "Like many preadolescent girls, she is sexually curious- but she has no control over her relationship with Humbert." This, however, is not true. *Lolita* is, most definitely, a child. She is a whiney and immature little girl. She is not responsible for anything at all, including her personal hygiene. This, however, does not mean that she was the victim in the situation created between herself and Humbert. After all, how could *Lolita* possibly be the victim if she provoked Humbert from the beginning? *Lolita* knows what it means to be sexy. In fact, Durham later contradicts himself by saying, "She is eagerly invoked in the popular media, as a sign of just how licentious little girls can be." Because of the media, *Lolita* knows how to dress sexy and appeal to men of all ages. For example, the first time that Humbert ever sees *Lolita*, she is hardly wearing anything at all as she is lying by the pool. Though she may not be aware of the fact that she is provoking Humbert at this time, she most definitely dressed in this manner to provoke a member of the opposite sex. *Lolita* knew exactly what she was doing and how she appeared to the male's eye, and, because of this, she initiated the sexual relationship that later sparked between herself and Humbert. In the long run, *Lolita* turned out to be very intelligent and used sex with Humbert as leverage to fulfill whatever materialistic desire she had.

Not only does *Lolita* provoke Humbert with her appearances from the beginning, but, throughout and within the relationship, *Lolita* begins to gain a sense of control and dominance. As the plot of the novel progresses, this control and dominance that the reader can sense in *Lolita* grows with the relationship between her and Humbert. *Lolita* is hardly aware of her dominance at the start of the novel. She does, however, most definitely have the upper hand in the situation occurring, not because she is strong, but because Humbert is weak. In her presence, Humbert crumbles. While she is around, he is at a loss for words and cannot even concentrate on what is going on around him. We first see these traits when Humbert first sees *Lolita*. Not only does he appreciate her appearance, but he completely forgets his environment in an effort to attract her attention. The reader may be confused at this point, because, as a stepfather, Humbert does show an aspect of control later in the

novel. However, it is significant that this control is seen when Humbert is playing the role of ‘stepfather.’ When Humbert is intimate with Lolita, he loses his sense of reality as his long-lost fantasy sets in. Humbert is willing to do anything to keep his fantasy occurring, even let Lolita take control of their intimate relationship. Lolita expresses her control by conning him into buying anything she wants and going anywhere her heart desires in exchange for sexual favors. In fact, by the end of the book, Lolita is in complete control as she continuously denies a life with Humbert. Humbert throws away everything in his life to win the love of a young girl. This is not only weak, but pitiful, and Humbert’s vulnerability easily leaves Lolita in a position of power and dominance.

As I stated before, Lolita, in a position of dominance during this time period, is extremely peculiar. For example, I found two incredibly sexist articles in the June, 1950 version of Life magazine. The first, on page seventeen, is an advertisement for a new book coming out titled *The White Tower*. The title of this book, if you think about it in a metaphorical way, is the first sexist object in this article. In this advertisement, the observer could find sexual references in both the text and the image. In the description of this book, we see the words “excitement” and “gasping thrill.” These are both words that could be associated with sexual activity. It is within the image, however, that we see male dominance in this advertisement. The advertisement for this book makes it appear to be a romance novel. On the front of this advertisement, we see a man gazing into a woman’s gorgeous blue eyes. It appears to be very romantic, until we consider who is dominant in the picture. The gentleman’s hands, in fact, are placed on each of the woman’s shoulders, appearing to force her to face him. He is closer to the observer’s point of view, causing him to appear larger than he actually is. This makes the male appear to be the more dominant individual in the image, because we assume that the larger a person is, the stronger the person is. Once the observer begins to look at this picture as the male in a position of dominance instead of longing, it appears that he is lecturing the girl as opposed to gazing into her eyes. In fact, by the way he is looking at her, he almost appears to be saying, “Now, didn’t I tell you not to do that?” His hands could be forcing her to look at him because she doesn’t want to listen, not because he longs for her attention.

The plot and facts in *Lolita* are completely contradictory to the facts in this advertisement. While this article, from the same time period, emphasizes sex and intimacy in almost every way, *Lolita* seems to diminish the sex scenes from the book. For example, the first time Lolita and Humbert make love, the reader can simply see a jumble of random foreign words. The advertisement, however, emphasizes sex in several ways including the picture of “the white tower,” the text seen that includes “excitement” and “gasping thrill,” and the potential passionate look that the man is giving the woman in the artwork. In addition to the sexual contradiction, there is the contradiction of who is of a dominant power in both pieces. In both of these 1950’s pieces, we receive completely different male and female roles. While it is obvious that the man is dominant in the advertisement by his size, position, and appearance, Lolita continuously expresses the dominance of a young girl over a grown man. Though *Lolita* may not be physically dominant, she does use sex as a form of

dominance in order to get whatever she wants out of this affair that she has created with Humbert. In all reality, these two pieces should be exact opposite. The male and female in the advertisement should be of equal dominance, while Humbert is dominant over Lolita as a stepfather. As I said before, the male-female roles seen in Lolita are completely contradictory to the typical roles from this time period. This is a prime example of that contradiction.

The second advertisement, from the same edition of this magazine, was found on page seventy one. This advertisement is for nylon bathing suits. In this ad, we see the woman closer to the observer's perspective and a man hollering after her because she is in such a good looking swimsuit (the ad wants us to believe). At a glance, the woman does, indeed, seem to be in control here. She is gazing back at him with a "hard to get" look on her face. He is jumping in the air and appears to be ready to chase her anywhere. However, when we look a bit deeper into the time period this article was created, one could believe that the literal reason for the article is promoting male dominance. Why would a woman want to buy this bathing suit? Because the men like it. Women, in this era, functioned to please their men and raise a family. If a bathing suit will make your man happy, why not buy it? In fact, there is proof within the article that these bathing suits, made for women, were made to please men. At the top of the page, in bold print, the article states, "Everything you ever wanted." Well, how do we know that this statement isn't referring to the woman in the article? This statement was placed directly above the man's head on purpose. Later in the text, the advertisement states, "What man wouldn't go wild?... A man has a right to go wild about these..." After reading the fine print, the observer could clearly see that "you" in the first quote was not at all referring to the woman in this article. "You" was, most definitely, referring to the man.

Yet again, this article, from the same time period, is completely contradictory to the actions seen in Lolita. In this article, we see a woman buying an object solely to please a man. Back in the 1950's, women often operated to please their men. As seen in this article, as long as their man was pleased, all was well in the world. This fact was so drastic back then that they used women pleasing men as a form of advertising. Though this is seen still today, it is not nearly as literal as it is in the article. In the 1950's, women did everything simply to please their men. Women had their children, made them dinner, made their bed, cleaned their house, did their laundry, washed their dishes, and waited to kiss them when they walked through the door every evening. In Lolita, however, Lolita only pleases Humbert for what's in it for her. Whenever Lolita does Humbert a favor, she expects to get something out of it. Contrary to the article, Humbert buys and does nearly everything to attract the attention of or please Lolita. He takes her on trips across the nation, buys her whatever she asks for, and spends an unlimited amount of time spoiling her in every way he can. This would be completely normal had he been doing this out of his fatherly love for her as his daughter; however, Humbert spent all of this money on Lolita in order to receive sexual favors and, eventually, win her heart. In opposition to the article, Lolita uses her appearance to get what she wants, not simply to please her man.

It is peculiar that Lolita continues to remain dominant throughout this entire

novel. It is obvious, however, that, even though it opposes the time period, Lolita's dominance and strength as a woman in her relationship with Humbert grows, literally, until their last words. The last time that Humbert and Lolita speak to each other involves Humbert laying down his life simply for her to be a part of it. As usual, Lolita is in the upper hand. In this situation, Lolita is in an extreme position of dominance, as Humbert is willing to lay everything down for her heart and her time. Lolita, for the first time in the novel, denies his offer. Humbert sinks to a new level of submissive as he retaliates and kills the man who she is having a baby with.

Not only was Lolita's dominance in this novel peculiar because of the time period, but it was significant to the time period. For the first time ever, readers were introduced to a submissive male character that would lay down anything for the love of this little girl. In discussions, we, the readers, continuously mentioned an unknown power about the novel that none of us could quite put our finger on. This power must have been Lolita's power. The fact that Humbert would, indeed, give anything for Lolita's love and affection is touching and powerful to the reader. This novel not only provided a contradiction to the time period, but it became significant to romance novels worldwide during this time period. Not only was her significance powerful in the novel, but her power was significant enough to leave a mark on the history of all romance novels.

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The Ecuadorian Ethnicity Today

The common language of Spanish, spoken by millions of people throughout the world, is one of the strongest links between the many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds that compose the Hispanic and Latino groups. With the rise of non-Hispanic people learning Spanish throughout school, what used to be a language barrier between Hispanics and non-Hispanics is now become a point of cultural relation through sharing a language. Communicating with members of different ethnic and cultural groups is one of the greatest ways to share and learn what makes people different, while at the same time what can bring us together. Spanish is the major language spoken in Latin American countries, which includes the regions of South America, Central America, Mexico, and much of the Caribbean. Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Belize, Venezuela, Colombia, Nicaragua, Peru, Grenada, and Panama are just a few of the many countries that speak Spanish as a primary language. The vast cultural differences that can, and do, exist between countries and ethnic backgrounds despite sharing a language is one of the most fascinating aspects to studying culture. Though a person may share a common language with members of other ethnic backgrounds, each ethnicity is individual and has its own culture that is specific to the members of that country. This can very well be seen in the Ecuadorian culture, an ethnic background of people from the South American country of Ecuador.

In Ecuador, language is a dominating social and cultural similarity among the people. While some may assume that Ecuadorians are all of the Hispanic/Latino background and thus speak Spanish, this is not always the case. In fact, Ecuador features an interesting characteristic of the people who make up the country: a combination and intermingling of different races that make up the Ecuadorian people. The races that are found with prevalence in Ecuador include the labels known as *blanco*, *indio/indigena*, *cholo*, and *mestizo* (Belote, L.S. and Belote, J., 24). These terms, which might appear as racially charged to people of Western heritage, are the culturally accepted terms in Ecuador that correspond respectively to white, Indian/Native American, Hispanic/Latino, and “Mixed-Blood” (Belote, L.S. and Belote, J., 24). The mere fact that these terms exist in Ecuador indicate that Ecuadorians are a people not of one race, but of one culturally-binding heritage. Language, like race, also cannot be applied to all people in Ecuador. The *indigena*, or Native Indian people, speak a language called Quichua in addition to Spanish. (Clark, A.K., 200). What this aspect to Ecuadorian culture indicates is that race and language are part of the larger picture of what defines being Ecuadorian, both as a culture and as an ethnic background.

While race can be subjective, especially because of the widely varying skin colors of Ecuadorian people, from white to light and medium to dark, race can also be viewed as subjective due to the existence of a process termed transculturation (Belote, L.S. and Belote, J., 24-28). In this phenomenon, members of one racial group can individually make the decision to change racial and/or ethnic groups and be accepted as one by the receiving group, while also experiencing a change in social mobility (Belote, L.S. and Belote, J., 27). This is often seen in both directions

between blancos and indigenas, and often takes the form through marriage to a member of a different racial group than oneself (Belote, L.S. and Belote, J., 29-29). This melding and changing of racial groups is the reason behind why census estimates of Indian/Indigena population statistics have ranged from 30%-60%, while the percentage of those who speak Quichua is around 16% (Clark, K.A., 200). From this inconsistency in identifying racial groups in Ecuador, an emerging theory, Mestizaje, has stated that the people of Ecuador are all becoming alike through the mixing and changing of races to become predominately mestizo, or mixed blood of Hispanic and Native Indian descent (Clark, K.A., 199-202). Overall, it is apparent that neither race nor language alone can characterize the people of Ecuador, as a variety of races come together to make up the culture and heritage that is being Ecuadorian. Though language is an important unifying force among Ecuadorians, what will be seen is that more dominating influences in Ecuadorian culture include values, beliefs, religion, customs, and food.

The value of work among Ecuadorian people is something that is viewed with great duty and responsibility in the culture, regardless of region or racial/ethnic identity. Early on, children are taught the importance of contributing to the household and family, and often do this by beginning to work at quite young ages (Clark, K.A., 189-192). Lilia Obando, who immigrated to the United States from Ecuador at the age of 16, remarks that one of the most important benefits of immigrating to the U.S. was the availability and variety of employment opportunities that existed, which she might not have otherwise had the chance to pursue had she stayed in Ecuador. Work ethic is extremely important as it applies to the overall welfare of the family, another significant value of Ecuadorians. While growing up, John Obando, Lilia's son, remembers hearing stories about his parents' lives in Ecuador before they each immigrated here, and how much harder life was for them growing up because they had to work at a much earlier age than American children do. With the recent rise in Ecuadorian immigration to the U.S. and to European countries, reasons for moving often include work opportunities and the increased ability to provide financial support to family back in Ecuador (Estevez, S. M.) An interesting facet to recent emigration from Ecuador for work purposes includes an increase in the use of digital media and technology in order to stay connected with Ecuadorian life, despite the uprooting through emigration. (Estevez, S.M.). This implies that, for many individuals, the primary reason for emigrating from Ecuador is for work purposes, due to the strong value Ecuadorians place on providing for family and hard work.

Family values are another prominent aspect of life for many Ecuadorians. As many Ecuadorians make the major decision to move to a different country for the sole reason of being a migrant worker to send money back home to family in Ecuador, this begins to show the strength of the family system in Ecuadorian culture. John Obando views Ecuadorian family values as a core part of his culture. He states, "I see Americans as having less of a focus on all aspects of family relationships. We have a closeness, respect, and duty to our families that extends well beyond what most Americans feel it should." For the Obando's, this is demonstrated in their care-taking for a member of the family with advanced Alzheimer's Disease. While many Americans see putting elderly loved ones who need advanced care in nursing homes

or other care-giving facilities as normal and accepted, Ecuadorians, who show a very strong family aspect to their culture, would be less likely to view this as an option. Family relationships and care-giving are of a higher priority in many cultures than they are to Americans, and this is definitely observed in the Ecuadorian culture.

With strong family values, comes strong religious beliefs that are also a major component of life for the majority of Ecuadorians. The vast majority of Ecuadorians are members of the Roman Catholic Church (Clark, K.A., 195). Lilia Obando cites, "Ecuador is very religious and mostly Catholic; most of the festivals and events are centered around the Roman Catholic calendar." These church related events include processions and parades, especially in the capital city of Quito where she lived near, and particularly around Easter and Holy Week. Though many of the events and celebrations in Ecuador are religious in nature, there are other cultural traditions that are celebrated in Ecuador that do not necessarily relate to the people's religious beliefs. For instance, Lilia Obando recalls that around Christmas and New Years was a celebration termed *Munecos de Año Viejo*, which translates to 'Dolls of the Past Year.' This event featured burning dolls and other representations of public figures in the center of the street at midnight to celebrate the end of the year and the coming of a promising new year. While the majority of traditions that are celebrated in Ecuador are religious in nature, celebrations can also represent culturally significant values that are specific to Ecuadorians and their beliefs.

Food, like religion and family values, is another central characteristic of the Ecuadorian culture and ethnicity. Distinct dishes are often associated with certain celebrations, events, or religious days. For example, during Holy Week, a stew called *Fanesca* is prepared, which consists of fish, corn, beans, potatoes, and lentils, among other ingredients. When asked about the importance of teaching her children aspects of Ecuadorian culture, Lilia Obando stated that she thought it was important for her children to know their ethnic background, and for this reason she taught them the foods, dances, and clothing that are specific to Ecuador.

There are many cultural differences that exist between Americans and Ecuadorians, such as differences in work ethic, family values, religious fervor, and ethnic cuisine. These differences are oftentimes more pronounced for an immigrant, who fully experiences a new culture first hand. For Lilia Obando, she remembers the difference in lifestyle pace when she first arrived in New York from Ecuador, realizing that Ecuador was much more relaxed. She also remembers seeing Americans as friendly and polite, like people in Ecuador are, but she does feel that this may not be the same for immigrants today. Though there are distinct ethnic and cultural differences between Ecuadorians and Americans, unifying sources include the popular language of Spanish, the common religion of Catholicism, and above all, social and cultural acceptance.

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Mainstreaming Hearing-Impaired Children

The syllabus for our English 227 class, Elements of Linguistics, notes the subject of the final essay is to be a topic of direct interest-while applying key ideas from our studies. With this in mind, my subject literally jumped off the page, as I read the account of the hearing-impaired Nicaraguan children in Chapter 2 of our text The Language Instinct. Our second daughter Rebecca, born in 1981, is hearing-impaired. It is hard to pinpoint the onset of her problem, since prior to about eighteen-months, she exhibited more or less age-appropriate vocal skills. However, after a series of ear infections and subsequent anti-biotic treatments, we noticed speech deterioration. Considering her age, the diagnosis probably would have been pre-lingual impairment. That is, had we been referred to an appropriate specialist, such as an audiologist. In any case, due to misdiagnose at the hands of our pediatrician, and the brushing aside of our concerns, we did not fully recognize the problem, and consequently procure hearing aids for Rebecca until she was ready to enter kindergarten.

As a direct result of experiences in dealing with Rebecca's impairment, I have developed strong opinions on the subject of mainstreaming. This paper will allow me to air some of them, and at the same time touch on what we as parents, and Rebecca as a child dealt with in the course of her upbringing and education. Some of what we learned through hard experience might be of help to other parents, and give insight to future educators who will undoubtedly encounter hearing-impaired students during their careers'.

Since virtually everything related to education, and indeed life in general is regulated by public law, I would like to begin with the formal definition of the term deaf as reported to the President and Congress of the United States. The source of this definition was the book, Hearing-Impaired Children in the Mainstream.

We also use the term deaf to refer to all persons with hearing impairment, including those who are hard of hearing, those deafened later in life, those profoundly deaf, etc (16).

This obviously covers a vast amount of territory. In Rebecca's case, the eventual diagnosis of her loss, about 90% average uncorrected, placed her in the category of hard of hearing. The first pair of hearing aids we obtained for Rebecca when she was five-years of age were simple amplifiers. Nevertheless, her speaking clarity and general awareness seemed to blossom over night. Rebecca does not sign; however, if I had the knowledge I now have from our class derived from Steven Pinker's The Language Instinct, learning sign language would have been a priority. This is of course in response to evidence the prime window for language acquisition is prior to age six. Accordingly, Rebecca at age twenty-eight would have no easier time learning American Sign Language than I would at age fifty-one. As a side note, primarily due to what I learned in class, ASL is probably going to be my choice to fulfill my foreign language requirement. Ominously lurking in the background is the knowledge Rebecca's current diagnosis is Usher's syndrome. Thankfully, she has not exhibited the full-blown symptoms of gradual, total deafness and near blindness. But I would rest easier if she, and I for that matter, already signed.

As previously noted, Rebecca's being fitted with hearing aids coincided with her entering kindergarten. Due to our late awareness of her impairment, we did not avail ourselves of programs which would have given a head start in adapting to her handicap. One point I cannot stress enough to parents is simply being assertive. The fact we were a young couple, combined with upbringings that taught us doctors, along with other health care and education professionals were the experts, caused us to delay crucial decisions during Rebecca's critical, formative years. These professionals, however, are not infallible. Indeed our experience bore out this quote related in *Hearing- Impaired Children in the Mainstream* "For years I sought answers from experts. Then my child went to school and I discovered I was the resident expert" (11).

Kindergarten was a generally positive experience for Rebecca, and she was adapting quite well to the hearing aids. Additionally, her scholastic progress was bearing out our long held belief she was a child of normal intelligence. Rebecca attributes her progress mainly to the teacher who gave her the necessary attention and additional instruction to help compensate for her disability. However, she felt somewhat a social outcast, but even this issue seemed to resolve quickly. In fact, she had adjusted to the point that when given a send-off party prior to entering a new school, one with programs supposedly tailored to hearing-impaired students, she was, in her words, "sad to leave."

Since I've been throwing around the term "mainstream", I would like to provide a definition from the Webster Handy College Dictionary; Mainstream- v.t. put (handicapped students in regular classes.) With this in mind, I would like to delve into the point in Rebecca's scholastic career when we were advised to enroll her in deaf student oriented classes at the school I alluded to previously. The fact that these classes were held in a "normal" school, as opposed to a residential facility strictly for the deaf may meet the technical definition of mainstreaming. However, since the hearing-impaired children were taught in isolation from the other students, I would like to proceed from the position they really weren't mainstreamed.

Upon entering the special program, some key issues became apparent: First, many of the children had other issues in addition to their hearing-impairment; some were stone deaf, a number had emotional issues, and several had other learning disabilities. Consequently, the pace of the classes was tailored to their abilities, leaving Rebecca, a student of normal intelligence, unchallenged. *Hearing-Impaired Children in the Mainstream* makes note of this very situation;"In addition, one finds children enrolled in public state schools with , one, two, and three additional educationally handicapping conditions beyond their deafness" (16). Second, many of the children signed to some degree, and as pointed out earlier Rebecca did not. This further isolated her, which was not helpful in an already difficult situation. During the time-frame being referred to, mid-nineteen-eighties, lip-reading and vocalization were also heavily promoted. Both concepts have fallen out of favor for children with some hearing abilities. *Hearing-Impaired Children in the Mainstream* points out that "optimizing any residual hearing is critical for maximizing a child's functioning" (27) and this was the case with Rebecca's hearing-aids that brought her hearing much closer to a normal level. Given this, Rebecca's thoughts, upon entering

a new and completely alien environment, understandably were of bewilderment. Her evaluation of the situation as an adult recalls her feelings at the time; that is, she didn't belong there and wanted to be with normal kids. She adds that she used to be "treated normally," [at her old school] but felt like she was being "treated as though she was retarded" at the new one. Additionally, we also noticed a distinct degradation of Rebecca's oral communication skills. And even though she was only in the special program for a short time, (less than a month) she seemed to be falling into a condition we learned about in class, that of children mimicking the speech and communication skills of their peers. This would verify the theory that children take on the characteristics of others their own age, since they are the ones who will be the direct competition for resources, such as jobs and spouses.

Clearly, the above related situation was not acceptable. Rebecca, a child of normal intelligence, with a corrected hearing-impairment, did not belong in the program we had placed her in. We were at a crossroads in her life educationally and developmentally, and a decision had to be made. This decision, much to the consternation of the special program teacher and Rebecca's guidance counselor was to place her back at her original school. Upon conferring with the principal there, it was decided no time should be wasted in returning her to a normal classroom setting. In fact, after learning of Rebecca's experiences at the special school, the principal said bring her back immediately; we would deal with the paperwork later. So at this point, we were back where we started, but much wiser from the experience: Right or wrong, we were committed to thrusting Rebecca into the mainstream.

To be fair, mainstreaming is far from a universally accepted practice. For a different perspective, I turned to *For Hearing People Only*. Primarily referring to totally deaf students, a good deal of the prevailing school of thought on the subject of residential-versus-mainstreaming is contained in this passage: "Good residential schools offer advantages no mainstreaming program can: an abundance of trained professional staff, individual attention, a 24 hour learning/social environment, everyday exposure to ASL, equal participation in all activities, and Deaf role models" (100). And while the above statement may be true for the totally deaf, it is much less clear cut in the case of a child with partial hearing loss such as Rebecca. Indeed, on the next page, in a discussion of residential-versus-mainstreaming we find a somewhat contradictory statement: "One problem the residential schools have long been struggling with is lower expectations... Traditionally, graduating deaf students as a whole have scored significantly lower in academic achievement levels than their hearing counterparts, particularly in English skills (101). I think the above quote, reinforces my position that children such as Rebecca, are better accommodated in the mainstream, particularly, when the ultimate goal is preparing them to function in the world at large.

This is not to imply that everything in the mainstream is smooth sailing. To be sure, challenges will arise, sometimes daily. *Hearing-Impaired Children in the Mainstream* makes this statement: "Under the best of situations, almost every classroom offers a poor acoustic environment" (95). This goes without saying for any student, but it is especially vital to a hearing-impaired child. As related earlier, Rebecca's first pair of hearing aids were simple amplifiers, and consequently raised

the volume of all classroom sounds: background noise, chit-chat, ventilation; the list goes on and on. However, it is not difficult to deal with these issues with forethought and cooperation. Primarily, the student must have a direct line-of-sight with the teacher. And even though lip reading is not always effective, observing subtle body movements, and facial expressions are important elements of receiving a spoken message. This is true for individuals of normal hearing, and vital for the hard of hearing. The remainder of kindergarten and in grades one and two, the teachers made a great effort to communicate effectively with Rebecca, and it showed in her scholastic progress; she consistently scored in the upper range of the class. This situation continued until she entered the third grade, where for reasons that even today are somewhat of a mystery, her performance deteriorated.

Rebecca remembers the day vividly when she was called to the teacher's desk and shown the grade book. The teacher pointed to a row of zeros, and asked if she knew what they indicated. Since Rebecca was a serious student, she was devastated when told this meant she was failing. Clearly there was a problem. Even today, the embarrassment she felt comes through loud and clear when she relates the story. Unfortunately, she was so humiliated that she did not even want to tell us what had happened. But eventually it became apparent that she was deeply troubled by something.

A conference was scheduled with the teacher, who informed my wife that Rebecca had an attention problem. In a masterful demonstration of self-control, my wife reminded her Rebecca was hearing-impaired, and therefore required some additional consideration, and at times assistance to be sure she was in fact getting everything that was going on in the classroom. When this avenue did not produce the desired results, we appealed to Rebecca's school appointed speech therapist, who assured us the situation would be corrected.

Hearing-Impaired Children in the Mainstream points out, "When communicating with hearing impaired persons, speakers should use natural speech at a moderate pace and with a normal speaking voice. Use of exaggerated mouth movements, extremely slow or quick rates, or overly loud speech, destroys the natural rhythm and intonation..." (134). That's all pretty common sense stuff, but somehow, the message wasn't getting through. It seemed as though the teacher was trying to overcompensate, or possibly not cooperate, with all the associated problems. Thankfully, Rebecca survived the year, but even more importantly, she, and we as parents learned a valuable lesson: Put the needs on the table, and above all be assertive: If the desired results are still not attained, don't hesitate to appeal to a higher authority.

The next several years were very productive. In fact, Rebecca's fourth grade teacher recommended her for the Gifted and Talented program. When we moved to another school district, the teacher there followed the previous one's lead and suggested she be placed in that system's equivalent program. This particular teacher acknowledged he was at times somewhat lacking in communication skills; specifically, he would lecture the blackboard. This is not a good practice, with hearing-impaired students or otherwise. To compensate, he gave Rebecca permission to hit him with a crumpled up piece of paper if he committed the offence. I'm not

sure if she ever took him up on the offer, but his sincere effort was appreciated.

Rebecca was progressing academically, socially and emotionally quite well. However, when she one day announced she was interested in joining choir, we were somewhat taken aback. There is, or so we thought, a vast difference in following oral and written instructions, and more importantly, comprehending them, which she was succeeding at, and mastering the subtleties of tones required for success in music. Even though she had cleared numerous hurdles thus far, we were worried she was setting herself up for disappointment. She had other ideas, and was persistent, so in the end we relented; she tried out and was accepted.

Hearing-aids, being mechanical devices have a limited service life, generally, about five years. When a replacement pair was called for, the audiologist recommended we try some new technology in the form of programmable aids. Their chief benefit was the ability to screen out background noise, and overly loud sounds in general. Advancements such as these are not inexpensive, but since we wanted to give Rebecca every possible advantage we took the plunge. The results were nothing short of amazing! And nowhere was the evidence more pronounced then in the area of music. Almost immediately Rebecca went from being an also-ran in an entry level choir, to being elevated to the school's highest group, where she competed at the state level. Additionally, she performed a solo in the drama department's annual production. After all this, when she announced she wanted to join band as well, our quick response was to buy her a flute. Another point I would like to stress here along with being assertive and proactive, is if a hearing-impaired child is going to achieve their full potential, it's also necessary to take some risks. Music was and is a big part of Rebecca's life, and in many ways her success in that arena gave her the confidence to succeed in high-school, and beyond.

I would like to begin this section with another quote from *Hearing-Impaired Children in the Mainstream*. "Because individuals do not 'outgrow' their hearing loss, many need as much or more support services in college as they needed in elementary or high school. College may not be the time to "go it alone." There are many support services available to all college students and several special services that can be made available to students with hearing loss" (245). Rebecca submitted an application to Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation, the agency that oversees these special service programs in Indiana. Since hearing-impairment is a federally recognized disability, we learned Rebecca had access to a wide array of programs designed to give her the best possible chance of success at the out-of-state, private college she had been accepted at. Tuition assistance in the form of grants was also included in the package. The goal of these programs is simple; to assist individuals that otherwise might be dependent on society, to become productive members instead. After her loss was documented, Rebecca was assigned a case worker who explained exactly what was available; this ran the gambit from FM transmitters, recorders, strobe light alarm clocks and telephone devices for the deaf, to a personal stenographer to shadow her from class to class with the object of generating transcripts of all lectures. And while some of this "hardware" did prove useful, what proved most beneficial was the same thing that had fostered success at the pre-college level; direct, proactive communication with the professors as to what would

be most helpful in the absorption of the tremendous amount of information that was soon to barrage Rebecca.

Her freshman year frankly was not the success story we were used to. Whether it was her hearing-impairment, the new, and in some ways, overwhelming amount of information to be processed, inappropriate class choice, or some combination of the above, the bottom line was Rebecca wasn't doing well. Her GPA for the year was 2.0. After a change in the focus of sophomore year studies, she brought her GPA up to a 3.3; the number she ultimately graduated with earning a B.A. in Psychology. Additionally, during her college career, she was the student leader of a travelling campus drama group, and also a resident assistant.

Rebecca went on to earn a M.A in Counseling, with a GPA of 3.9. All of these accomplishments I believe are significant in making the point that she, was on her way to becoming a well-rounded adult, one readily able to assimilate into society. As an additional hard earned benefit; she understood well, the struggles shared not only by hearing-impaired people, but the larger group with all manner of disabilities. This last quality would eventually serve her well in her chosen field as a crisis intervention specialist, working with troubled teen-agers. I am totally secure in my belief, these accomplishments would not have been possible had we left Rebecca in the original special program. In her case, mainstreaming was definitely the right choice.

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Salvia: Still Legal, But Is It Safe?

Among the types of illicit drugs that are used by people, from adolescents to adults, hallucinogens have presented as a major class of drugs that have retained popularity throughout much of the past century. From the surge of their use in the 1960s and 70s to their significant presence in the drug culture of today's younger generation, hallucinogenic substances have maintained a pattern of steady involvement in the eclectic mix of drugs that are taken. Among the most well known hallucinogens are lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, mescaline and peyote, all of which are illegal in the United States and the vast majority of other countries. *Salvia divinorum* differs from the other hallucinogens in that *Salvia* is actually legal in the U.S., and acts on a different receptor in the brain to produce its hallucinogenic effects. The growing popularity of *Salvia* among adolescents and young adults has started to evoke concerns about its current legal status and the long-term effects of the drug on the body. Once an obscure substance, *Salvia* has become a drug whose appearance on the modern-day drug scene may not be seeing an exit anytime soon.

Botanical classification of *salvia*, or *Salvia divinorum* as it is formally known as, is of a strain of the plant species *Salvia*, a member of the mint family, that is a lightly flowering plant that grows in moderate to high temperatures in a wet environment (Dalgarno, 2007). Flowers are small and of variations in lavender in color, while some strains of *Salvia* do not flower, as in the case of *S. divinorum*. An unusual property of *Salvia divinorum* is its very infrequent production of seeds, a characteristic that explains the plant's low reproduction rate and subsequent rarity of being found in naturally growing plant populations (Dalgarno, 2007). Additionally, studies into the botanical roots of the *Salvia divinorum* have shown the species to be a product of inter genus cultivation that occurred sporadically in nature, giving rise to the unique species *S. divinorum* (Dalgarno, 2007).

Salvia divinorum has its origins in Oaxaca, Mexico where it was traditionally used by Mazatec Indian shamans for religious purposes (Singh, 2007). The early hallucinogenic properties of the drug were used by the shamans in medicinal healing practices and to obtain an altered consciousness in order to achieve a deeper meditation and stronger visions, a purpose which led to the name of *salvia divinorum*. (Albertson & Grubbs, 2009). The earliest known use of the plant, however, is unknown, but is speculated to date back to the Aztecs (Dalgarno, 2007). *Salvia divinorum* is also known as Diviner's Sage, Maria Pastora, magic mint, and PurpleSticky.

Chemically, at least six different substances have been extracted from the leaves of *Salvia divinorum* and examined for their respective psychoactive effect (Singh, 2007). Salvinorin A has been found to be the most potent among the extracts in terms of the psychoactive effect produced, and has even been identified as the most powerful naturally occurring hallucinogenic substance found to date (Albertson & Grubbs, 2009). Biological activity that is responsible for the hallucinogenic effect of *salvia* is due to its behavior as an agonist of kappa opioid receptors in the brain,

a receptor target that is directly contrasted with that of other hallucinogenic drugs which act on serotonin receptors (Albertson & Grubbs, 2009). This dichotomy between the receptors targeted in most hallucinogenic substances to that targeted by salvia lends some reasoning to the existence of a broad range of reported effects by salvia users.

The hallucinogenic effects that salvia users experience when taking the drug vary greatly; this may be consistent with the highly individualized reports of effects that many hallucinogenic drugs produce or from the spiritual and mood-environment factors of the salvia drug-taking. Major hallucinogenic effects of salvia include altered time-space realities, compromised reality detection, and strong sensory effects with minor effects reported of inability to control some motor functions, synesthetic occurrences, and memory and consciousness issues (Braida et al., 2009). These effects are generally seen in users by uncontrollable laughter, beliefs one has been transformed into people or animals, being in multiple places at once, feelings of levitation, and increased sense of self-awareness (Singh, 2007). In one study by Albertson and Grubbs on salvia use as reported by college students, an average rating of 'intense' to 'extremely intense' was given in description of the effects of the drug (2009). In comparison to effects of other drugs, 43.8% of users reported effects of salvia as being most similar to marijuana, 22% reported most similarity with psychedelic mushrooms, and 9% likened the effects of salvia to LSD (Albertson & Grubbs, 2009). However, a study by Gonzalez et al. found that only 20% of salvia users reported effects as being similar to marijuana (Braida et al., 2009). Another significant response to kappa opioid receptors in humans is mood alteration, an effect which represents another facet of experienced effect differentiation between each salvia user (Braida et al., 2009). The apparent diversity in reported effects may be due to subjective factors, like personal experience, mindset, and mood, or due to a dynamic and individualized interaction of salvia on the kappa opioid receptors in the brain.

The sensory perceptions encountered by those experiencing the effects of salvia seem to be mainly concerned by time-space realities and synesthetic, or visual-auditory accessory sensory stimuli, means. In a study by Dalgarno of 10 salvia users, the reported effects varied greatly on the spectrum of hallucinogenic tendencies of the drug, however, more users reported extreme and vivid visuals and feelings (2007). One user reported, "It was actually scary to begin with because it was like a plane taking off almost instantly..But after the blastoff start it leveled out really quickly and let me get grips with it" (Dalgarno, 2007). Another user reported, "It's weird though. I wasn't scared of the plant, it was more wondering how much stronger it was going to get and would I be able to handle it? As it turned out, it suddenly hit a plateau, and leveled right out. I can't explain. It was like I was rushing through space without actually moving. There was even a whistling noise in my head like I was moving really fast. And really frantic patterns, quite bright and constantly changing. A bit like a kaleidoscope" (Dalgarno, 2007). Here, a glimpse at the reality-altering effects of the drug are grasped, as users report a severe distortion on time and space, along with strong visuals stimulated by the drug. Two of the users in the study reported the effects to be highly similar to ketamine, otherwise known

as the club drug Special K, and one reported it to be resonant of a trip that would be produced by 'acid', or LSD (Dalgarno, 2007). Overall, the relationship between salvia and other hallucinatory drugs, along with comparisons to marijuana and ketamine, have all been established to varying degrees, with an end result of salvia producing an overall individualized and difficult to describe sensation of effects.

Effects of salvia are very unusual in that they appear within minutes of taking the drug, depending on the form of ingestion, plateau within minutes, and disappear fully in less than half an hour (Singh, 2007). This property of salvia is very much contrasted to the longer lasting effects of the majority of other drugs, including marijuana with a moderate effect time span to LSD with one of the longer time spans of drug effects felt. The toxicity of salvinorin A of salvia seems to be very low, as does the addictive potential and few, if any, withdrawal effects of frequent salvia use (Braida et al., 2009). Some effects of salvia may have implications in medicinal aspects, however little applications for therapeutic use are considered for salvia. Salvinorin A has an analgesic effect and also shows to decrease gastrointestinal upset and diarrhea in some animals (Braida et al., 2009) Additionally, some anti-depressant effects have been observed, specifically in rodents as reported by Braida et al., however these may be conflicted with instances of pro-depressant effects also observed (2009). As few studies have looked at the effects of salvia in humans, the long-term effects of salvia use is somewhat unknown. (Singh, 2007) This implies some concerns for the safety of salvia when any existing long-term side-effects have not been identified or discounted.

Methods of ingestion of salvia generally are limited to inhalation through smoking of the dry leaves of the *S. divinorum* plant, chewing the leaves of the plant to absorb salvinorin A through the membranes of the oral mucosa then the leaves are expectorated, and to a much lesser degree, the creating of a tincture of extracts of the *S. divinorum* plant that is absorbed through oral mucosa (Singh, 2007). Traditional use of salvia divinorum by the Mazatec people was limited strictly to chewing the dry leaves to extract the potent substances for absorption in the mouth, as they believed the effects of salvia would neutralized if the leaves were dried, as would be the case in inhalation by smoking (Dalgarno, 2007). Modern day and western use of the drug, however, is almost entirely encompassed by smoking salvia through the use of a water-filtered inhalation device similar to a pipe, a method which is also consistent with the ingestion of other plant-based drugs like marijuana (Dalgarno, 2007). Effects of salvia are observed with a shorter lag time when inhaled through smoking as opposed to ingested through chewing the leaves, with inhaling producing a shorter length of time of effects experienced and chewing producing a more prolonged, but less intense experience (Dalgarno, 2007). The primary method of ingestion in modern use of salvia remains inhalation through smoking due to the inconvenience and stigma of the chewing and expectorating process, along with longer time it takes for effects to be experienced, which is not desired by salvia users.

The rapid growth of salvia use in the last two decade has led to concerns over the safety and legality of the drug. While the drug retains legal status in most of the U.S., with a few states prohibiting the substance and recognizing it as illegal,

opponents of salvia urge the drug to become illegal and have moved for legislation of that intent. In 2002, an attempt to make Salvia a Schedule I controlled drug was proposed, which would move Salvia to the same status as heroin, LSD, and marijuana, however legislature did not receive enough support. However, salvia is illegal in some countries, including Australia under its strictest ban, Finland, Denmark, Spain, and Norway (Singh, 2007). Support for illegal status stems from the belief that if left uncontrolled for much longer, salvia will grow to the likes of more dangerous drugs, or may have serious long-term effects that are not yet known. Despite these issues, salvia has grown almost exponentially in popularity throughout recent years, holding a legal status that is rare to most drugs of its kind, and has become a common recreational substance that many young adults have taken to experience short-lived mind-altering hallucinogenic effects.

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Poetry

Dave Hunt
Amanda Elzbieciak

Demeter

She is rooted to the ground with her mind in the sky.

Her cold, steel wings stay rigid in the wind;
They are no use to her in flight.
But like the gentle wet wings of a newborn butterfly,
They carry the promise of future.

Her eyes, like ours, remain fixed on the horizon,
Hoping for a mended yesterday.
We bend steel and burn remnants of the past
To propel ourselves forward.

But let us not forget from where we come.

We survive on the plants that thrive in the soil.
Like excavators, they reach in the dirt
And pull up the materials for their bodies
That, in time, will build our own bodies.

We are birthed by our mothers but fed from the ground.

So in turn we use our excavators
To pull up the ore to mold her frame.
She has come full circle now, she is home,
Planted, once again, in the dirt.

Our minds will carry us far, to the sky
And onward to the stars,
But to sever our ties with the one who provides
Is to surely and utterly die.

Let us not forget from where we come.

Ten Years

An emotionless mask rests upon the brow
Of a valiant victor as melded from the steel shield
Of both ally and adversary
A course set
By the oarsman across the river Styx
Leads from a dreaded shore as it
Leads to a dreaded shore. More and more
Traveling home in tarnished attire
Once shimmering and shining brightly, beautifully.
His powerful presence commanding
Attention to being bold, daring, and triumphant;
Now is exhausted in effort
And unable to reach home
From this tepid wasteland of smooth and jagged glass.
A drifter lost and lonely;
Quivering, trembling, and frozen still.
Forever still.

Short Fiction

Dave Hunt

Jessica Baldwin

Adam Diaz

Sarah Redden

Time Away from Home

“Dylan, come inside now!” Jamie yelled from the back door. She pulled her robe in close to fend off the cold. She couldn’t see Dylan, her little angel of four years, from the door, but she knew he was in the back yard. He loved winter. He would play for hours out there, building frozen castles, molding imaginary friends from the icy clay, or just rolling out dozens of perfect little snowballs. He wanted to be ready for attack, he’d say. The neighbor kids, he would tell his mom, they could come at any time.

The strange thing was, he was quite good. Every now and again, Jamie would wrap herself in two sweaters, wool socks, a heavy winter coat, and a scarf and waddle out to where Dylan sat, sculpting away.

“What’s his name?” she would ask about one of the snowy mannequins, slowly coming to life under Dylan’s tiny, mitten hands.

“Tom,” he’d reply. “He’s a pilot.” She’d chuckle, looking at the scarf and goggles carved from the snow. She tightened her own scarf, hoping that Tom’s scarf was a bit warmer than hers. She looked around. There was a large castle in the corner of the yard. She looked in amazement at the tiny snow people populating the castle. It is amazing what the mind of a small child can create. Next to the castle was a simple wall of snow, facing the neighbor’s yard, equipped with dozens of snowballs stacked in a pyramid. She laughed again. If she could have just an ounce of Dylan’s motivation, she would be done with her filing in a matter of hours. Instead, her mind wandered to this and to that, and the next thing she knew she was brewing another pot of coffee and flipping on the tube. Just one more episode, she’d say every time. She worked as a secretary in a local legal office. Her boss was a nice man, very pleasant, but that’s not to say he was easy to work with. He allowed her to work at home if she wasn’t needed in the office that day, but she often wished for the quiet, distraction free setting of the office. It certainly saved them money on the babysitting bill, though. And on days like today, blustery and miserable, she was even more thankful.

She peeked through the curtains, blowing on her coffee. She watched Dylan approach the front door. His shaggy, blond hair poked out from under his fuzzy hat. He watched the ground float past him as he walked, meandering back and forth, searching. During the summer time, he would get side tracked watching a bug scuttle along or a squirrel hurry past. His curiosity was boundless. Now, there was only snow to watch, but that didn’t seem to dampen his curiosity one bit. He watched the ground all the way up to the front steps, as if expecting something.

Jamie cringed as the cold air intruded into her warm stronghold. She had been imagining herself a princess in one of Dylan’s castles. Sitting next to an enormous fireplace, reading great works of literature in peaceful silence, her handsome prince in the next chair. Servants would bring her steaming drinks in a rough, iron kettle. A crash from the kitchen jerked her back to reality. She looked up, and followed the trail of tiny winter clothing from the front door to the kitchen. She sighed. No, she was not royalty. She and her husband had to struggle to make ends meet, just like everyone else. She worked just under forty hours a week at the law office (her boss

did not want her to get any overtime) and her husband delivered goods for a trucking company five or six days a week. Just for a year, he said so long ago. It'll be good money, then they could buy a house and he could get a job closer to home. Now, five years later, he was on the road more than ever and their marriage was struggling. "Dylan, what happened? Are you alright?" she asked as she rounded the corner into the kitchen. Dylan was standing there with his little balled fists frozen at his sides. He had broken a mug on the floor. He looked at her, lip trembling. He looked slightly pitiful. He looked so cute, though, his button nose all red from the hours of cold and his blond mop disheveled from his hat. She couldn't help but smile as she set down her own mug and bent down.

"Sweetie, I've asked you to come get help if you need something from the cabinet." She picked up a few of the larger pieces and set them in a dustpan. "You're just not big enough to reach up there yet."

"I'm big..." he retorted in almost a whisper, his face scrunched in defiance of her comment. "I just wanted some cocoa."

"I'll make you some, sweetie. I'll get the water boiling and you can put in the powder, okay?" She handed him the broom to put away and walked the dustpan full of shattered ceramic to the garbage. Christmas trees and snowmen adorned the razor sharp pieces. That's just the way life goes, she thought. Something innocent can turn into something dangerous at any moment.

"What did you make out there today, Dyl?" she asked, turning around from the stovetop and reaching for her mug. Dylan was now sitting at the table, drawing on a napkin with some of the crayons that litter the table almost all of the time. God, his creativity just doesn't quit, she thought.

"Just played with Tom," he responded after a pause, distracted. It was funny, Jamie thought, he really believed in his created snow-people. She longed for that mindset again, to have that naïve perspective before the realities of life take their toll on the imagination. She thought it best to bolster his creativity as much as she could, so she humored him.

"Where does Tom the pilot fly?" she asked, blowing on the hot coffee.

"Oh, everywhere. He says he's been to the North Pole and the South Pole and everywhere else," he replied, though his attention was still fixed on his drawing.

"The North Pole, huh? Has he spotted Santa's house up there?" Dylan looked up now. Like any young kid, he usually perked up with the mention of Santa when there was snow on the ground. But he didn't look so happy now.

"No. Tom says Santa isn't real. That's kid stuff. I told you, I'm big Mommy." Jamie was shocked. Where did he learn about Santa? She and Dylan's father were hoping to tell Dylan the truth about Santa much later, and hopefully together. She was very concerned about who would go around telling a four year old that Santa wasn't real? Perhaps one of the other children in his preschool spreading their "wisdom" passed on from an older sibling. Maybe she could still convince him otherwise.

"Honey, I don't know who told you something like that, but your mommy is quite sure that Santa is bringing you some presents this year."

“It’s okay, Mommy,” he said consolingly. “I didn’t want to believe Tom either, but he’s been there, and he never saw Santa or his house and reindeer don’t even live up there, he said.” He was back to drawing now, the agitation had left his eyes. She decided to let this one go. This was so unlike Dylan. He usually loved talking about Santa. He would sit on his bed, pretending to fly around on his sleigh, throwing gifts to all his stuffed animals on the floor. She thought it was harmless, since he was pretending to be generous, at least. He didn’t seem to be too upset now, though, so she let it go.

Later that night, Jamie sat at her desk in her home office. She drew off her glasses and let them fall to the wooden desk. Rubbing her temples and squinting her eyes, she decided to take a break from filing to tuck Dylan in.

“Are you getting ready for bed, Dyl?” she called, pointing her voice up to reach him upstairs.

“Already in bed, Mommy!” he called back. Thank God, she thought. Maybe tonight would be stress free. The stairs creaked as she ascended. She pushed his door open and peeked in. He was reading a book with a stuffed animal under his arm, but it didn’t look familiar.

“What’s this, sweetie?”

“It’s Green Eggs and Ham, Mommy. We read it all the time.”

“No, no. This little guy.” She pulled it from under the covers. “Where did he come from?” It looked like a bear but it was colored like a tiger.

“Tom gave it to me,” he said with a smile. She thought maybe a teacher or something, but that was somewhat strange. Did she give one to all the students? No relatives had been by lately, so they couldn’t have left an early Christmas gift. Still, maybe it was forgotten in the back of the closet until tonight. She thought maybe she should wash it, but it looked brand new. She supposed it was okay. Back under the covers he went.

“Well, I hope you thanked Tom for the nice gift.” She was going to ask if he wanted Santa to bring him another one like it, but decided against it.

“I did,” he said definitively, and shut his book. “I’m tired now.” She said okay and kissed him on the head as he turned over. She gave him one more smile through the cracked door and started walking back to her desk. She stopped by the kitchen on the way, poured herself a glass of wine and washed down three nighttime pain relievers with it. She fell asleep at her desk, pen frozen in her hand. Even when her head drooped down to rest on the desk and the pen clanged loudly on the wooden floor, she did not wake up. She awoke much later with drool on her files. She swore. She’d have to retype those now, as she hadn’t saved them on the computer after printing. She drowsily lifted her cell phone to her face, looking at it askance, trying to dampen the intensity of the light. Seven thirty? Shit. She had slept that long at her desk? Dylan needed to be at school at eight. She shot up, banging her knee on the desk.

“Shit,” she whispered before yelling, “Dylan! Dylan, we need to get ready for school!” No response. She looked in the bathroom and the kitchen, yelling his name again. She noticed his boots were not by the front door. Oh God. Her heart

quickened. Did he go outside alone? How had she not noticed the sound of the door? She threw open the front door, called his name. She heard him respond, but from the back yard. She slammed the door and ran to the back of the house, swinging open the back door. He was out there, sculpting snow balls.

“Dyl! What are you doing? You have to be at school soon!”

“No school, Mommy! Look!” He pointed to the neighbor’s yard, across the back alley. The three neighbor boys were building their own fort and supplying it with plenty of ammunition. She went back inside and flipped on the radio. A few minutes later she heard the confirmation, local schools closed for snow. She called her boss and he agreed to let her work from home again today, as it was too late to find a babysitter before nine. She would have to be back in tomorrow, though. She went about getting her day started. First things first; she put on a pot of coffee.

After she finished retyping her ruined files, she looked out the window to check on Dylan. He was just coming back inside. She took a break from her work. They watched some TV, read a book together. She made lunch for them, grilled cheese. Dylan wanted another cup of hot chocolate; she had a glass of wine. It was nearly noon, she thought. No big deal. Dylan chomped down the last bite of his sandwich before declaring that he was going back outside. She agreed, and then her cell phone rang. It was her husband.

“I’m going to have to stay out an extra day or two, hon,” he said, just like he had so many times before.

It was always something. The boss found another load that needed moving, just the next town over. He’d have to pick it up the next morning, deliver it the next day, and spend another night in a motel before returning home. They did need the money, he always said.

“Your son needs a father, John. And I don’t feel like I have a husband anymore.” She was sick of these unplanned trips. They were in no danger of starving. This was his third extended stay in the last six weeks. It was bad enough that he had to be gone five days a week already. These extra trips meant that he was home for maybe an evening, and then back on the road the next day.

“There’s going to be some big changes around here when you get back, John. Big changes.” Curt I love you’s were exchanged, and she hung up the phone. She sat down at the kitchen table and put her head in her hands. She heard Dylan stomp his boots outside the back door before he opened it. He stuck his head into the kitchen.

“Mommy, can Tom come over for dinner tonight?” he said as if he had found a puppy and wanted to keep it. A smile broke through her clenched lips.

“Oh, I don’t know, Dyl. I think he might melt if he comes in for too long. And I don’t know what snowmen like to eat.”

“He’s not a snowman, Mom, he’s a pilot,” he retorted.

“Well, I suppose that will be alright. We’ll eat at five.”

Dylan took off his boots to use the bathroom and then went back outside. Jamie finished up her work for the day and started dinner at about four. She emptied a can of corn into a dish and heated it in a pot. She poured some Italian dressing over chicken breasts and into the oven they went. She cut a couple potatoes into strips and heated some oil in a pan. Homemade potato wedges were Dylan’s favorite. He would

probably eat them three meals a day if she let him.

Jamie had pulled the last wedges out of the oil when she heard Dylan come in the back door. The chicken and corn were steaming on the stovetop. She reached into the cabinet and pulled out two plates. She could hear Dylan shuffling around by the door, taking off his boots. He was whispering softly. She thought this was unusual, but not overly so. He was always planning things, especially in the winter time. He would talk to his stuffed animals about what to build out of the snow, but he usually didn't talk to himself.

"Dyl, hurry up and wash your hands. Dinner is ready." She heard his footsteps climb the four short stairs leading into the kitchen from the back door. Two steps per stair, since his legs were too short to take them one at a time. She heard his feet shuffling across the kitchen tile. She turned and ruffled Dylan's already messy hair. She watched him skip out of the room, and she heard the bathroom door shut. What she did not see was the stuffed animal tucked under his arm that he had not had when he went outside. She turned back to the stove to pour out the frying grease. Then she heard a loud footstep on the creaky wooden stairs behind her.

"Howdy, ma'am," she heard a deep voice behind her say. Her heart froze in her chest, but she jumped back in fright. It was like that voice awoke some animal instinct in her nerves, and they electrified themselves into action without her control. Her sudden jolt sent the pan of grease to the floor. She whipped her head back and forth from the floor to the man at her back door. There was a man at her back door. Her feet could not decide whether to back away from this man or to charge him. In that split second she took three steps, one forward and two back. In her confused waltz, she tripped over the hot pan and fell. On her way down she blindly reached out for support. She caught the hot stove top. She screamed a short, piercing scream.

Shivering with fright, she shuffled herself backwards. She watched an old man take the other three steps, each one creaking as he pressed a polished black dress shoe upon it. With each step he grew. From her vantage point on the floor, his black hat seemed impossibly high above her. His long, black overcoat and slow, fluid movements made him seem like a velvety ooze dripping from a crack in the ceiling. He grinned a pearly grin and moved his hat from his head to his chest. With his other hand, wrinkled and rough, he reached out to her. She scooted farther away, and struggled to get up, finding support from counter.

"Who are you? Why are you in my house?" she said, her voice shivering even more than her body. The man's smile grew, and he did not remove his hand. She started to say it again, who are you, this time more forcefully, but her words trailed away as she saw the man's face. More specifically, she was lost in the sightless gaze of his left eye. That eye was a sickening tangle of red veins and creamy white. There was no pupil.

"I must apologize, ma'am. I was under the impression that your son had received your permission to invite me to dinner." He spoke slowly and with a southern twang. He spoke like an old plantation owner with a hundred rebellious slaves buried behind his house. She mumbled several things in response, but could not find words to express her thoughts. All that came out were a few scattered words,

some cursing, some questioning.

After an agonizingly long moment he withdrew his hand and scratched his thin, white beard. He looked down at the pan and oil on the floor. She watched his eye move over the floor, back and forth, while his hands unbuttoned his overcoat. Underneath, he wore a black vest and bow tie over a pressed, white shirt.

“Now, I’ll tell you how you can remedy this little spill here, if you’d be so kind as to allow me the use of some of your bread flour.”

This was too much. Her brain could not process what was going on. She lifted her shaking hand and pointed to the clear bin on the counter. Her eyes darted around the room from her phone on the table, to the man now opening the flour bin, to the block of knives now inches from his hands.

He removed his black leather gloves but not his smile; it never left his face. Sprinkling the flour over the oil, he began to speak again, his one seeing eye remained fixed on hers. Even so, he sprinkled the flour only where there was oil on the floor.

“Sawdust works best, you know. For oil. And blood for that matter. I always keep plenty of sawdust on hand for just such spills.” His smile somehow grew bigger at this last statement. “Not too many folks keep sawdust in their kitchens, but most have flour.”

At this moment, Dylan came running into the room, smiling, giggling. He had wet spots on his shirt from washing his hands. Jamie scrambled to her feet and grabbed Dylan as he ran past. She shoved him into the wall and stood in front of him. He yelped.

“Ouch, Mommy, why did...”

“Dylan, quiet,” she ordered. She kept one hand on his chest and shot her other hand to the table. After several blind sweeps, as her eyes were still stuck on his sightless eye, she retrieved her phone.

“Mister, I don’t know who you are, but you better speak up soon.” Her finger had already hit the number one, the emergency speed dial, and the call button. Her confidence increased. She stood up straight. “I’ll be talking to the police in a second.”

The man took a step towards her. It was ringing much too long. An operator should be answering by now. He was getting closer. Confidence again shattered, she stole her gaze away from his for one moment to look at the phone. She saw her husband’s name flash on the screen before the man snatched it from her. She heard his voicemail message quickly fade from earshot. That sound, usually a source of agitation meaning that she once again could not reach her almost non-existent husband, was now her only contact with safety and it was dropping into the deep, dark pocket of a crazed intruder.

“Rules are rules,” the words oozed from between his teeth, “no phones during dinner. A family needs rules or it falls apart.” He glanced at his wristwatch. “And the way I see it, it’s five past five, and that makes it dinner time.” He turned around and reached behind the doorway. His hand reappeared with a broom.

“You changed your emergency contact to John’s number, ma’am. Do you not remember? When he was gone on business so much. You wanted him to be as close

as possible. You took solace in the fact that he was only a button away, even over all those miles. Little Dylan, will you help your mother and sweep up this mess?"

He bent down, still looking her in the eyes, and kneeled next to the mess. Dylan started to resist her grip, but she tightened. In the man's kneeling position, she could now see a pearly white handle protruding from his belt. Beneath the belt she saw the metal barrel. Her eyes once again met his. He looked at the boy and nodded. The unspoken deal had been made. She did not release her grip, but Dylan slipped through. Her hands followed him, but the man's unseeing eye had a gravity of its own pulling Dylan in. Behind the eye, she imagined a whole other world, dark and cold. She saw the man sitting on a throne in an ominous castle, servants with dead eyes serving him goblets of red wine on a platter. Wind and wolves howled, and he had the same terrifying grin. Wherever this man came from, castle or not, he was now in her kitchen holding her son.

Dylan swept the thick mush of flour and oil into the pan that the man held. He stood up, turned around and dumped it into the garbage can. She knew that that moment was an opening to do something. Something, but what? She could never hope to overpower the man. Old as he seemed to be, he moved with a hidden power. He snapped the dustpan back onto the broom handle, and put them both back behind the doorway.

"Now," he said suddenly, clapping hands together, "shall we?" He motioned to the table.

He sat down at the head of the table. He motioned for Dylan to sit next to him, which he did. He whipped the black handkerchief from his breast pocket and laid it on his lap. Dylan eyed him curiously, and unfolded his own paper napkin and set it upon his own lap. The man nodded in approval and Dylan smiled. Hands folded, the man watched Jamie clumsily carry the pot of corn to the table, pot holder beneath it. Dylan had his hands folded now, too.

"Now, dear, civilized people do not eat from cookware." He unfolded his hands and rested his forehead on his fingertips like a dissatisfied tutor. He picked up the plate in front of him and held it out for her. "Dish out a portion for each of us so that we can enjoy this lovely meal free of clutter on the table."

She finally had the table set, all the while under his careful watch and occasional verbal order. Under his direction, she placed a full plate in front of each of them, framed them in silverware, forks on the right and spoons on the left. When she pulled three steak knives from the drawer, he waved a hand dismissively. He said the chicken looked tender enough to eat with a spoon and knives would not be necessary. She rested them back in their place with reluctance. A tear dropped into the drawer before she slid it shut.

She sat down at the table opposite the man after pouring them both a glass of red wine. He remained still for a moment of eternity, smiling, until finally he stated that it was time for grace. He asked if she would like the honor of saying the prayer, and closed his eyes before she could answer. Dylan closed his eyes. He smiled the full, beautiful smile that he always had when they read Green Eggs and Ham together. Jamie opened her mouth to speak, bottom lip trembling, but her eyes stayed on Dylan. She spoke slowly and deliberately, her tone lower than usual as if weighted

down.

“Oh lord, we thank you for this food. We ask that you aid us in our daily struggle.” Her cheeks were painted with the moisture from many tears, and small puddles were forming on her plate. “We know it is impossible to comprehend how each and every person fits into your vast plan.” She stopped to sniff and clear her throat. Her eyes narrowed and moved from Dylan to the old man. “We beg you to give us the strength to defend ourselves against those who trespass against us.” She took a deep breath and began to stand up. “Amen.”

Her phone rang from within the man’s coat pocket, which was now draped over the back of his chair. His face reddened and his lips tightened. When his eyes opened, they were already fixed on Jamie’s like he could see through his eyelids. He reached into his pocket and held the phone for a moment before reaching it across the table. She was already in a half standing position, and took the phone from his hand. She flipped it open, and read the message from her husband.

“Cindy: Got another night in town staying at the Traveler’s Inn room 42 left another key at the desk.”

Jamie was frozen. She stared at the phone while a swirling thunder welled up from inside her. Her hand shut the phone as if another hand were moving hers. The old man stood up. Even as he walked towards her, her gaze remained frozen where he had been. Just before he was at her side, she suddenly grabbed her plate and whipped it against the wall. He did not flinch as he marched on. She screamed. She screamed long and shrill, eyes synched shut and teeth bared. He placed his hand on the back of her neck. She swept everything in front of her onto the floor with a clatter. She slammed her head into her quaking arms and sobbed uncontrollably. The wine bled through the white tablecloth, soaking all the way up to her hand, contorted and tense like it was gripping some invisible thing. The man was now knelt at her side, an arm around her shoulders.

“There, there, my dear. All is well now,” he said slowly, and nodded at Dylan. Dylan got up from his chair and put both of his tiny arms around his mother. He rested his head on her shoulder. “Your family is here for you, Jamie,” the old man whispered into her ear.

“John...oh, John...” she whispered harshly, voice trembling. Her tears mixed with the bleeding red stain in front of her. The old man’s breath was hot on her face.

“Yes, I am here,” he whispered into her ear. “I am here.”

Second Life

Taylor hadn't been expecting a call; especially not from her. He laughed quietly as he picked up the phone.

"Hello?" Taylor asked, though the caller ID had given him all the information he needed to know. It was the small jabs that thrilled him. Answering the phone as if he had no idea whose number it was would remind her of how long it had been since they'd spoken; it was the least he could do.

"Taylor, there's a cat and it's laying in front of my porch and it's not moving and it's making this terrible noise when it breathes and I don't know what to do." Desperation ran from her like a broken faucet.

"Whoa, hold on, slow down, Annie, what's going on?"

"There's an almost dead cat lying in front of my porch, Tay-lor," she said and broke his name down into two syllables, almost three if you were really listening. "What the fuck do I do?"

She enunciated every word like a spoiled child being refused a new toy. His mind meandered. He saw himself and Annie lying on the floor in front of the TV, watching Willie Wonka, eating burnt popcorn (their mom had never really learned to use the microwave correctly) and Annie repeating Veruca's most infamous line, "But I want it NOW!" She had exactly the same tone in her voice now.

"H-E-L-L-O, did you just hear what I said- help...cat...dead?" Her voice, petulant and panic stricken brought him back to the situation at hand.

"Ok, ok. I'm on my way!"

Ten minutes later, pulling into the driveway, he caught a glimpse of his sister as she paced back and forth in the small shoveled area directly in front of her steps. She walked three steps to the left, turned and walked three steps to the right, turned and hovered over something blocked from his view by drifts of snow. She spoke inaudible words. Even under the many layers of winter garb needed to keep warm in temperatures that dipped below freezing, Annie looked gaunt.

"Gaunt isn't even the word for it," he thought, as he climbed over snow drifts to get to her. Her cheeks were sunken in, as if she was attempting to pose for a 1920's pin up ad and was sucking them in with all her might.

"It's ok, kitty. Poor kitty. It's going to be ok," she said in a comforting, motherly tone. He wondered if she'd tossed her bottle of Vodka before he pulled in.

Her eyes, red-rimmed as if she'd spent too much time in ocean water with them open, glanced up at him as he approached. His heart fluttered when he took in the whole sight of her. Thin was just the beginning. Her hair was matted underneath the dirty and well-worn knit hat that even Goodwill would have turned away. Mascara that could have been from yesterday or the day before or last week was smeared underneath her eyes and now running down her cheeks because of the tears. Her clothes, clearly not washed any time recently (who cares about clean clothes when you're on a bender), hung on her like garbage bags. She was the tragedy not the dead cat.

"What the hell are we going to do?" Her voice quivered from the tears and broke

in an almost hysterical laugh. He knew that if he ever heard this laugh, Annie was in trouble. They hadn't always been so distant and he could remember a time, not all that long ago, that he could have heard that cry over the noisiest of crowds and come running. They were once true brother and sister, not just acquaintances calling in times of crisis.

He looked at the cat lying on the snow covered ground. She hadn't been exaggerating; it really did look almost dead. As Taylor approached, it lifted its head slightly and tried, with what little strength it had left, to escape this new threat. The back legs, clearly broken and limp as a flag on a windless day, didn't move as the cat's front paws pulled the dead weight in the back.

"Taylor, what-are-we-going-to-do?" She stamped her foot with impatience and nearly fell as she slipped on the ice.

"Christ, I don't know," Taylor mumbled, and looked at his watch. No vet clinic would be open.

"Well, we can't just let it freeze to death in the snow," Annie whined.

"Look at the back legs, I think freezing to death in the snow is the least of this cat's concerns," Taylor thought as the cat laid its head in the snow once again, not concerned anymore with who or what was around it. He felt bad for the poor animal; it was clearly in a lot of pain.

"I guess we'll have to take it to an emergency clinic, do you know where one is?"

"Yeah, because I've had soooo many pets," she retorted.

That last statement had hurt his feelings for some reason. He didn't have to be here. He'd had a pretty good day, up until now, of not really doing anything. He finally had a day off and this is how he was spending it. Why call him out here if she didn't want his help? "Ok, well I can just leave you here to deal with this on your own if you want."

"No, no, no, no. I'm sorry, I just...I mean it's... you know...it's hurt and... maybe we could call Information?" she said.

Taylor whipped out his phone and dialed the number. Having a plan always made him feel better.

"I'll go next door to see if they have a cat carrier," Annie announced, clearly proud at her contribution.

Ten minutes later, the poor cat, lying in a cat carrier clearly too small for it, was placed gently in the back of Taylor's truck; they were on their way. The whiz of the tires against the road and the occasional, and continually feebler, hiss and gurgle of the cat in the back were the only sounds in the truck. Locked in a power struggle that spanned years of sibling rivalry, both Taylor and Annie were determined not to be the first to speak. There had been too many hurts and hard feelings. After the third gurgle, however, Taylor broke down. Losing this battle was better than having to hear the poor, wretched animal in the back even one more time.

"I called last week," he said.

Her eyebrows rose slightly, surprised that she had won this game. "I know," she said casually.

"How's work going?" He could feel her resistance to the coming conversation. She knew what he wanted to talk about. They'd had this conversation many times before.

“Fine,” she replied, her annoyance apparent.

“You look thin, Annie.” He decided that just coming out with it was his best option at this point. She would either listen or she wouldn’t.

“Poor cat, who could do such a thing? Who could hit a cat and just leave it?” she said, desperately trying to steer this conversation in another direction. Taylor had been trying to “help” her for the last two years, but you can’t help someone who doesn’t think they have a problem. And Annie definitely didn’t think her drinking was a problem, though it frequently led to her passing out on his couch unable to remember the events of the previous night and had even landed her in the hospital twice. He snuck a quick glance at her out of the corner of his eye and couldn’t help but remember the perfect, blonde ringlets adorning the head of the angel she had been. The memory made him want to cry, but he bit his cheek. The salt and iron taste of the blood sobered him a little.

“Mom called wanting to know if I’d seen you-”

“I mean, I didn’t even see any paw prints,” She said cutting him off mid-sentence. “Someone must have hit it and then dropped it off on my porch. Who the fuck does that?”

“Mom and dad are-”

“There’s no way that that cat could have pulled itself onto my porch,” she said. Letting him finish the sentence might mean she’d have to listen. “I mean someone had to make the conscious decision to dump that poor animal instead of taking it to the fucking vet. If I hadn’t walked out when I did, I might have had a catscicle tomorrow morning.”

They both laughed at the last statement. Partially because it was funny and partially because they both knew it was sick to be laughing in a situation like this. Then the mood turned and silence fell over the cab of the truck. Her hands were shaking.

“How long since your last drink?”

“God, just shut up, just fucking shut up! God! You and mom and dad...I’m fine, there’s not a problem. Why do you all think you have to fix me every single fucking time you see me? I’m not sick, there’s not a problem and this is the reason I never call.”

“Your hands are shaking, Anne.”

“I haven’t had a chance to eat yet, God, I’m just hungry!” she said as she yanked violently at two loose threads hanging from her sweatpants.

“It’s 7:00 at night,” he whispered this last thought, unsure whether or not he should even bother pointing out the obvious.

She rolled her eyes and stared out the window, winding her long hair around her finger. His mind was racing; he had been fighting for his sister’s life for two years now and he was exhausted. She looked exhausted too, and so much older than him, though she was his junior by 3 years. She’d seen too much in 23 years. Her skin was sallow, tinted yellow like a worn sheet of paper stained with coffee and experience. Now that they were shut up in this small space, he could smell the booze. She drank so much vodka during the day that it oozed out of her pores. How could he hope to bring her home, to breathe life back into her, if she was convinced she was living in

paradise?

The cat hissed again and feebly attempted to claw its way out of the kennel.

“Do you think it’s going to make it?” she asked quietly, staring down at her sneakers as if not looking at him would give the cat a better chance.

“I don’t know,” he said, “it looks pretty bad.”

“Yeah, but maybe it’s just a broken leg. It could just be a broken leg. The vet could fix a broken leg, right?”

“I don’t know, probably,” he said and shrugged. He wanted to say more; to reassure her that everything was going to be OK, but sitting in the truck, with the ravaged remains of the little girl that used to call him “Tywer” and the death rattle coming from the back seat, he felt completely helpless. If he could just say the right thing, if he could just come up with the right words, maybe she would come back to him. What was it, what was it she needed? Wasn’t it his job to have the right words, to protect her from everyone and everything, including herself?

The trees and houses whizzed by in the dark as the road stretched out before them for what seemed like an eternity.

“Lots of things survive, even when they’re really broken, right Ty?”

He heard her childhood name for him and looked at her with hope for the first time in so long. The cat struggled again in the back seat. Turning to glance at it, he saw a small, fragile paw extended between the bars, life now hanging in the balance. He took Annie’s hand and she let him.

“Yeah Anne, I’m sure everything is going to be fine.”

The Wolf and the Hawk

Scott's family sat frozen, terrified that at any moment they could somehow be drawn into the altercation taking place. Aunts and uncles, cousins and second cousins, all had gathered to celebrate his graduation, but instead had become an audience to the familiar scene of Scott's mother in a tirade inspired by suppressed anger and copious amounts of alcohol. Long ago they had abandoned any notions of trying to soothe Theresa's rages, instead biting their tongues until her storms passed. But not Scott. Not this time. His cold indifferent eyes stared blankly at his mother, a stark contrast to the crooked smile on his face.

"You're just going to leave?! What, are you going to go run to your little tramp Sara? I don't think she'll take you in tonight!" Theresa's face flushed red as the slurred words and spittle sprayed from her mouth. "I plan this whole open house for you, and now you're just going to leave? I raise you, feed you, put a roof over your head, and this is how you repay me? Theresa's shouts now reached the outside guests, immediately infecting their conversations with the silence that pervaded inside. "Well?!"

"I repaid you," Scott replied calmly, "by paying for everything your welfare and food stamps didn't cover since I was thirteen and Uncle Richard gave me a job sweeping a floor out of pity. I repaid you by taking care of you and the house since you're always too drunk to do it. And I'm leaving because, as always, you've made today all about you by making a drunken fool of yourself."

Theresa let out a deep breath, some of the red fading from her face but eyes still furious. Two fingers poked through the air in Scott's direction, cigarette caught between them losing its spare ash. In a vicious tone Theresa snapped, "You're going to wind up just like your father." Gasps and shouts erupted from different corners of the room.

"You're one to talk," Scott replied numbly, talking over the others who quieted at his words. "After all, killing yourself with a bottle is the same as using a bullet. At least he had the decency to be quick about it." Stunned silence hung over the room. The words should have hurt to say. They didn't. With a curt nod, Scott turned his back and left, determined it would be the last time they would ever see him.

The sidewalk passed by underfoot, hardly noticed. Numb, Scott climbed into his 1963 Chevrolet Corvette, powder blue, glowing in the night from the soft light of the streetlamps. Scott didn't notice. The cracked vinyl steering wheel on his palm always thrilled him, sending cold chills up his arms, but not tonight. Scott drove, thoughts of his father paramount in his mind. The car was all that remained of his father's belongings. The rest his mother had burned or sold. A broken down shell was all that remained of the car when Scott's father made his abrupt exit from the world, but years of Scott's hard work had restored it, piece by piece.

The car seemed to drive itself. It took Washington to Oak, Oak to Main. Several classmates walked from open house to open house, waving as they passed. Scott didn't notice, Greenwood High School only had 46 graduating seniors being sent out into the world, and most had decided their current jobs and homes would suit them for the rest of their lives. The engine roared louder as Main Street turned into Route

56. The roar was distant to Scott, overwhelmed by the words “Just like your father,” repeating over and over in Scott’s mind. The road began to wind, Greenwood melting away. The Swanson Creek Bridge lay only a mile outside town limits. The car pulled over and parked.

The stone ledge of the bridge was cool through Scott’s jeans as he swung his legs over. Moonlight reflected off the rushing water underneath, the storms for the past month having transformed the creek’s normal soft babble into a raging cacophony. The water’s roar sent a soft vibration through the stone. Scott pulled his class ring off, turning it over on his finger. Eyes closed, Sara’s face danced on the back of his eyelids, her innocent smile painted across a thin, angular face framed by beautiful, long blonde hair draped over one shoulder. That innocent smile, once genuine, but now exposed for what it truly was; a mask. A fact ignored for far too long, one that could no longer be denied.

Her scene at his open house had made that clear. Drunk, she had shouted about anything and everything, and at anyone unfortunate enough to make eye contact with her. Trying to calm her down had only angered her, shouts finding new target in Scott, accompanied by her two fingers being thrust in his face. The ash from her cigarette had floated onto his cheeks during her tirade. Scott’s eyes clinched shut as the beautiful, angry face shifted to an older one, weathered from grief and alcohol. Shame overwhelmed him as his head shook vehemently, trying to dispel the image from his mind, a situation all of his own making.

An engine’s roar pierced the night, shattering the isolation Scott had so desperately sought out. The roar sounded different than that of Scott’s Corvette as it marauded down 56, leaving Greenwood. Scott gazed out to the water rushing under the bridge at the unmistakably herald of the 1977 Chevrolet Camaro. Steve lived on the far limits of Middleton, the neighboring town further down 56, hopefully his destination. Courtney would be sitting shotgun, likely listening to Steve detail his hatred for Scott as he so often did. His best friend would only tolerate so much before it became an argument. Scott’s brief hope the car would pass by diminished along with the car’s roar, accompanied by the squeaking of old brakes being applied, followed by rusty hinges yielding to an opening door.

“Scott,” Courtney said as she closed the passenger door, “what are you doing out here?” Silence answered Courtney’s question. Only one door had opened. Steve remained in the car to glare at Scott through a film covered windshield while he flicked ash off his cigarette held out the window. Courtney carefully sat next to Scott, her back to the creek. Scott’s eyes remained fixed on the growing darkness ahead. Clouds blocked the moon’s light, cutting off the flow from the water below. “Well?” she asked, clearly expecting an answer.

“I had to get away,” Scott said, glancing at Courtney to find her staring at him through narrowed eyelids. It was no use to lie to her. Friends always knew when the other was lying. Sara had once been his friend too. They had all been so close as children, but then faded through middle school, evaporating completely when Sara and Courtney had gone in different directions in high school. Scott was the only link that remained between them.

Courtney’s expression softened as she said, “Rough time with the family?”

Steven honked the horn, shouting something indistinct out the window, thick off a heavy tongue. Steve's glare came through glossy eyes, more intense than normal.

"You should go. I don't want to get you in trouble," Scott said, nodding towards the Camaro.

"Shut up," Courtney said, shooting Steve an angry glare of her own. He lit another cigarette in response. "What happened?" Scott recited the end of this open house, detailing his mother's rage and the words he'd let escape in front of his family. Steve was smoking a third cigarette by the time the story concluded. "I'm sorry," Courtney said. "About Sara too. I heard what happened earlier." Scott barked a laugh, Sara's face dancing through his field of vision briefly, Steve's honking resumed, longer this time, but he didn't bother shouting. "Oh all right!" Courtney shouted back to the car. "You going to be all right?" she asked, hopping down from the ledge.

"Yeah," Scott lied, avoiding her eyes. Silence held for a moment, Courtney's concern palpable. Scott shifted on the stone ledge. Courtney glanced towards the water rushing below the bridge, her fingers gently pulling Scott's ring from his hand.

"I spent two days deciding what I wanted on my ring," she said softly, holding up her hand. "You took two minutes. A wolf for our school mascot and a hawk for who knows why." Scott took the ring from her, turning it over so he could see the hawk.

"It was my dad's mascot," Scott said. "I tried to keep his class ring, but my mom sold it at the pawn shop." Staring out at the water, he could feel Courtney's eyes fixed on him still. Flashes came from the clouds covering the moon, thunder booming softly afterwards.

"I didn't know," Courtney said thickly.

"I know," Scott said looking back. Courtney's eyes watered. "I don't like talking much about him." Scott sat in silence, wishing for the second time in the night he had his words back. Small raindrops loosed from the sky, gently tapping on the stone as they struck.

"You do know how proud of you he'd be, right?" Courtney said hopefully. "He really would be." Scott's head shook, gaze shifting downward to the water rushing by unseen in the night's darkness.

"No," he said softly. "He wouldn't be proud." Thunder rumbled overhead.

"Then why did you put his hawk on your ring?" Courtney asked softly.

"To remind me," Scott said.

"Of what?" Courtney's voice was thick, her tone pleading.

"That I'm my father's son," he answered. The volume of taps from the stone ledge grew; wind picking up as it thrashed about Courtney's neatly cropped brown bangs. Silence stretched on. Courtney's arms slide around Scott's waist, hugging him tightly. Words formed, instructions, demands for her to leave him to what must be done. A lump in his throat blocked their exit. His arms were wrapped around her, but he didn't remember putting them there. The sound of a horn rang out again, a sharp crack of thunder booming overhead drowning it out. Steve's shouts returned, struggling along with the horn to be heard. Time to go. "Goodbye, Courtney."

Courtney's fingers dug deeply into Scott's side. His hands took hers gently, putting them at her sides. Her hands held his tightly, halting their retreat. Rain camouflaged her tears. "You may be your father's son," Courtney said, eyes holding

Scott's, refusing to let them go, "but that doesn't mean you are him." Her hands slid from his, pulling the ring free with it. In one motion Courtney's arm swung out into the night, fist closed tight at first, and then opening free. Scott's eyes watched as the ring soared out into the darkness, disappearing. The surging water below enveloped the sound of the splash, blending it perfectly into the symphony of nature's chaos.

Scott looked back to Courtney, finding only her back. Rusted hinges open and closed, tired squealed and the Camaro's engine roared in the night, fading quickly as the distance grew. Scott looked back out into the darkness and the storm, fresh arrived. Whipping wind and thunder howled, time flowing past as the downpour came. Lightning flashed all around. The tempest's rage was a distant stranger in the night. There wasn't a storm, or a bridge, or a river below. Only a lump in Scott's throat that wouldn't go away.

Hours later the storm passed, the clouds dissipated, and soft moonlight shined down where Scott had once sat. The stone ledge was darker now, coated in dampness. The entire area was saturated, save one small spot that had remained protected throughout the storm, covered by a 1963 Chevy Corvette that was making its way back into Greenwood. Scott was his father's son, and always would be. It was something he could live with. Something he would live with. Because he was different. Courtney's words repeated in his mind during the drive home, along with a thought of his own. He was his mother's son too.

Feeding Time

"Hi, sweetheart, how did it go last night?" asked Gloria Jean, as she eyed her husband coming through the front door. It was 7:30 in the morning and Gloria Jean was getting her clothes ready for work.

"It was really crazy, lots of drunks, had to escort a couple of them out," stated Calvin shrugging out of his bright blue coat with the fluorescent patch flashing SECURITY on it while holding on to the brown bag that Gloria Jean knew contained a six pack of Old Style beer.

"Man, I am really tired, and I'm starting to get one of those headaches," sighed Calvin, as he walked into the bedroom. He slumped down in his chair, turned on the computer and popped the tab on a cold beer.

Gloria Jean closed her eyes, blew out her breath forcefully and shook her head, dreading what was coming next. She knew he only got "those headaches" when he didn't eat. "Did you eat something last night?" she asked hesitantly.

"That food in the cafeteria looks like someone had played in it, it's always dried out by the time we have lunch. Besides there was a lady in front of us coughing on everything, not even bothering to cover her mouth, and then Baby, you know what she did? Had the nerve to pick up a piece of chicken with her hand, and then put it back and get another piece. Everyone behind me starting yelling at her. I'm really hungry, fix me something to eat," said Calvin.

Gloria Jean, married to Calvin for nearly twelve years dreaded that one little sentence. Every fight they had ever had started with the phrase, "I'm hungry." Calvin hated her cooking, no matter what she cooked, he was never satisfied. He refused to cook for himself, and wouldn't think of ordering out. In the winter he complained that too many fast food employees went to work sick, and coughed all over everything, and in the summer the restaurants were too busy to be very clean. Gloria Jean looked at the clock, knowing she had to be at work by nine, and with apprehension asked "What do you want?"

"I don't know, what do we have?" he asked.

"We have the cornflakes you asked me to buy Sunday, eggs, sausage and bacon," she rattled off a little loudly.

"I can't do milk this morning my stomach still hurts from yesterday, what kind of sausage do we have?" he asked. He reached for another beer while trying to bring up the internet.

"I bought ground breakfast sausage, smoked sausage, polish sausage and some Johnsonville brats," stated Gloria Jean from the bedroom door as she stared hard at the back of his head.

"You know I can't eat that ground sausage, gives me heartburn. Can you fry the smoked sausage instead of boiling it this time? and don't burn it. I hate it when you burn it," he yelled, clearly irritated that he was talking to her back.

"That woman never pays attention to me," Calvin said, just loud enough for her to hear it.

Gloria Jean looked at the time on the microwave, 7:45, she had about twenty minutes before she had to get dressed. She searched through the icebox looking for

the smoked sausage, but couldn't find it. "Calvin, the smoked sausage is gone, the kids must have ate it," she hollered from the kitchen, hoping to speed things up.

"He always does this to me," she mumbled miserably as she waited for a reply.

Calvin stood in the doorway in his briefs and socks, his beige uniform shirt unbuttoned, maybe his third beer in his hand and roared, "Damn it, how many times have I told you to tell them to leave my food alone! What am I suppose to eat now?"

Gloria Jean's heart was pounding, her breathing was loud in her ears and it felt like steam was raising out of her robe as she looked at Calvin, "But we have the other saus...." she was cut short as Calvin, his eyes squinted, lips scrunched together, pointed his finger at her and coldly said,

"You do this to me on purpose, don't you. You don't respect me, and you don't teach them to respect me either. I don't want anything." Calvin slammed the bedroom door so hard that it popped back open.

Gloria Jean, her eyes blurred by tears, entered the bathroom and turned on the shower, snatching blindly at the faucets, as her anger rushed out along with the water. She cried out as she undressed, "Why the hell should I respect you when you don't respect me! I work just as hard as you do. You don't appreciate nothing I do for you." As she stood under the punishing pulse of the water, she let the words fly, "I hate him, I hate him, I hate him." She daydreamed about cooking up lots of food, tying him to a chair and force feeding him, jamming lots of sausage into his mouth until he couldn't breathe. Or she would cook mashed potatoes and gravy, his favorite, and add just enough poison to do him in. But she was a coward, she couldn't bring herself to leave him, let alone hurt him. Calvin was not a bad person, he was just not a nice one anymore. Calvin's let life's problems suck all the joy out of living.

Gloria Jean got dressed and checked her watch, it was 8:25, if she hurried she would have time for a Caramel Latte from Starbucks before work. She peeped into the bedroom, hoping he is asleep. He is not. "You were going to leave without giving me a kiss," Calvin accused. Gloria Jean walked over and gave him a quick peck on the mouth, stepping back quickly out of his grasp. "I'll see you at lunch," Gloria Jean said hurriedly as she left for work.

John J. Pappas Literary Award

Heather Alicia Bell
Nichole Y. Murphy

Persuasion: The Correlation Between Character and Appearance

Persuasion, written by Jane Austen, is a novel that values someone's character before one's class distinction or appearance. Austen writes *Persuasion* with a didactic undertone, intending for her readers to follow Anne Elliot along on her journey of moral growth beyond those of her acquaintance, who are either ignorant or conceited. She does not want us to value Anne for her beauty but for her mind. This is easily proven by the fact that Austen does not clearly define any of her characters' appearance for her readers. Instead she gives us glimpses into their minds through free indirect discourse, so that we may get a clear picture of their personality in order to judge them. Yet, if this is true, why is it that Austen's overall depiction of a character includes whether or not they are beautiful? In this novel, does the portrayal of one's appearance correlate with the worth or merit of one's character?

Throughout *Persuasion* we can find examples of characters who are seen as having a fine appearance but do not have an altogether fine character. Sir Walter, Anne's father, is the first character we are introduced to that fits this description. Austen gives her readers a very exact depiction of his character and of his appearance:

Vanity was the beginning and end of Sir Walter Elliot's character: vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth; and, at age fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did; ... (4, Ch. 1)

This description of Sir Walter's handsomeness is at first provided by the narrator; therefore, we may except this description as fact. Sir Walter also believes he is better looking than most, even at his age. He also believes that his situation, or his wealth and class distinction, was better than most. This quote also implies that he lived and breathed this idea night and day, and that it colored all of his opinions of others. Sir Walter held others up to his standards of appearance and situation. Upon hearing that an admiral would be considered as a tenant of his estate, Sir Walter claimed that he did not like sailors, because the navy gives unworthy men a way to rise above their lowly situation and it makes men weary looking and ugly. Yet, when he met Admiral Croft, Sir Walter found him to be a good-looking for a sailor, enough so that he was worthy to be seen with him and to rent his home. This is why he refused Anne her dowry when he learned of her engagement to Captain Wentworth: he was a lowly sailor without any money or distinction. Sir Walter is not a malevolent character. He is lacking merit because he believes that one's appearance and/or birth mean everything.

This is why he prizes his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, above Anne and Mary. Elizabeth's thoughts follow along the same lines as her father: she puts too much stock into appearance and class. Aside from the fact that Elizabeth is vain and snobbish, we cannot actually say she is an altogether bad character in the book. She is guilty of nothing more than overlooking Anne and being blind to Mrs. Clay's schemes. Our only reference to what Elizabeth looks like comes from Sir Walter's point of view. She is seen as more beautiful to Sir Walter than the others, even though she is approaching thirty. Is it because she is his protégé that she is seen as

more beautiful to him? She is still unmarried; therefore, we can conclude that she cannot find someone up to her standards, and that when she does, such as with Mr. Elliot, he will not have her. This begs us to wonder whether or not she is as beautiful as told by Sir Walter or if he is biased by affection of her similar character.

Another good example of a character who is seen as beautiful but is morally lacking is Mr. William Elliot, the heir and cousin of Sir Walter. He was found to be agreeable in both looks and manners by Elizabeth and Sir Walter. Indeed, Austen provides us with a whole paragraph dedicated to his appearance through the eyes of Sir Walter. This is much more information than we get about the rest of the characters. Sir Walter goes on about his good looks; yet, he does emphasize a singular bad feature, an unsightly projecting lower jaw. It seems that as readers we are meant to take notice of these features because they are emphasized. Anne feels a cautious of him because she feels he seems too perfect, yet lacking that frank openness which she finds so appealing. She believes Mr. Elliot's perfect manners to be a sham in order for him to get close to her family again. Her fears were then confirmed when upon visiting Mrs. Smith she learns that Mr. Elliot is "black at heart, hollow and black" (187, Ch. 21). Anne finds out that his true reason for his returning to her family was to regain his certainty of his future baronetcy. It appears that he had lost all of his money and just as he began to see the value of a baronetcy when he learnt of an insinuating women who meant to become the next Lady Elliot.

Thus, Mrs. Clay is also exposed as someone with little character of worth. She turns out to be placing herself before Sir Walter in hopes of remarrying him, but is then lead into being a mistress to Mr. Elliot. Mrs. Clay is not found to be exceptionally beautiful but well-looking by others excepting the fact of her freckles and snaggletooth. These features were emphasized by Elizabeth while trying to admonish Anne's theory of Mrs. Clay's wickedness. It is here that a correlation between our two antagonists can be drawn. Their over-all good appearance and manners act as a mask concealing their deceit. This is because most of the characters in the novel hold one's appearance and manners in high esteem. Anne is the only character who feels suspicious about them since they do not make mistakes or have any true emotions revealed. Mrs. Clay and Mr. Elliot are both cheerful, polite, exceedingly helpful, and fair looking. We are also told by Sir Walter and Elizabeth that they possess a singularly ugly and distinguishing feature upon their face. This could be a way of Sir Walter and Elizabeth unconsciously seeing their bad character written across their face, since they both identify with personal appearance. These masks cannot completely obscure this nature. Their one unfortunate, ugly feature could be considered as an indicator for their ill-character because it cannot be covered by their mask, at least not initially.

We can conclude that these masks are a result of one's conniving and deceitful nature. That their polite mannerisms and quick smiles can make one's outward appearance improve with acquaintance.

"I should recommend Gowland ... Mrs. Clay has been using it at my recommendation, and you see what it has done for her. You see how it has carried away her freckles." Such personal praise might have struck her, especially as it did not appear to Anne that the freckles were at all lessened. (137, Ch. 16)

In chapter 5, Mrs. Clay's freckles were referred to as a personal misfortune by Sir Walter. After spending quite some time with her for several weeks, her flattery and manners seem to have diminished her flaws enough that Sir Walter no longer recognizes them. He claims they had all but disappeared, yet Anne, who sees that Mrs. Clay is smart and playing Elizabeth and her father, cannot distinguish any difference in her appearance. Her appearance has become more pleasing to Sir Walter's eye because he has come to like her. How wrong Elizabeth's opinion is when she claims "an agreeable manner may set off handsome features, but can never alter plain ones," (34, Ch. 5). She finds Mr. Elliot to be handsome because of his impeccable manners. Thus contradicting herself, because her father and herself did not actually find him to be that handsome upon first meeting him. Therefore, Mrs. Clay's freckles, as well as Mr. Elliot's jaw, are features that cannot be over-looked initially but with time can be forgotten because of their pleasant charade.

Appearance has been proven throughout the novel to be malleable. In *Persuasion*, appearances of characters alter upon first meeting someone and once you get to know them. Mr. Elliot proved to be more likable once one allowed themselves to become charmed by his manners. The same can be said of Mrs. Clay, as long as one does not look too deeply. But Anne really proves to us that appearance is not what one's value of character should be based on. She initially seems like a meek, haggard, and plain lady who faded into the background. Sir Walter claimed that she had lost her bloom of youth too early. Although Anne maybe somewhat plain, she has a generous and sympathetic character. Once she begins to fall in love with Wentworth all over again, her spirit reawakens; thus giving her a more glowing appearance. Her true character never really changes when she finds happiness and forgiveness from Wentworth. But her appearance to others is altered by this happiness. She is more pleasing to the eye as well as her company. With happiness she gains more confidence and takes part in conversation more rather than allowing herself to continue being a wall flower. It's not that her appearance has truly changed all that much, but rather her mannerisms and how she presents herself.

Even though *Persuasion* puts a lot of emphasis on the meaning of character versus appearance and wealth, they are still very important factors to take into consideration within this novel. We almost always are told how someone's overall appearance is viewed by surrounding characters and not Anne because of this free indirect discourse. How someone views someone else and who is doing the observing can be important because it may be an indicator of a character's worth. In this respect Austen can actually lay the blame of a character's appearance on another character. Anne and herself are able to remain neutral in this aspect, giving them a better ability to judge one's character. This is why Anne can see our antagonists' deceit. She does not need their appearance, as Sir Walter and Elizabeth do, in order to judge someone.

Sir Walter and Elizabeth use one's appearance almost as a wall to distance themselves from those they believe to be inferior to them. As they grew to like someone, these bad features begin to diminish in their eyes to compensate for that distance. They are very poor judges of character and perhaps should stick to their *initial* perceptions of appearance. Upon getting to know someone in this novel,

their view of someone's features could be misconstrued and forgotten. Someone who is conniving and wicked could overcome their bad features with a mask of good manners. So while one's character may have a correlation with one's overall appearance, it is not the deciding factor to their worth. Moreover, it is who's doing the looking that matters.

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A Forbidden Love on Brokeback Mountain

In the short story, “Brokeback Mountain,” written by Annie Proulx the love story of two troubled cowboys struggling with their sexuality on the rugged countryside of Wyoming is told. As young men, Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist are put together by chance to work on Brokeback Mountain. Ennis was to prepare the meals and tend to the campsite while Jack was to tend to the sheep. Their friendship and attraction began there, and grew into a love that spanned over 20 years beginning in 1963. This love was of course hidden just as many same sex relationships from the past and present are concealed and thought of as being “forbidden.” This essay will examine why the same sex relationship between Ennis and Jack was “forbidden” and why the love that the two shared was to be kept only between them. To help answer this question, homosexuality will be viewed from social and psychological perspectives. The fears and consequences of being a homosexual male living in Wyoming during this time period will also help to answer the question as to why being gay was not showed openly. The findings will be applied to the characters of Ennis and Jack to show why they did not fully embrace who they were. This story is vital because many of the fears and uncertainties that Ennis and Jack felt are still experienced today by many homosexuals, 50 years after this story begins.

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

Ennis and Jack meet in Wyoming, a western state surrounded by rugged terrain and dominant macho mindsets. On two thirds of the land lies mountain terrain and the majority of the population is white Americans. This is important to note because the races that make up Wyoming will also dictate the social standards in which this area will or will not accept. This section will look at homosexuality through the very masculine and dominating male perspective that was held by many traditional thinkers living in Wyoming. But first it is important to show that the love and friendship that develops between Ennis and Jack begins in the very same way that it does for many heterosexuals. Next, the rural non evolving mind set of many westerners will be looked at to see how this contributed to the isolation and “forbidden” love between Ennis and Jack. Under these circumstances Ennis and Jack make efforts to try and hide their true sexualities and conform to what society viewed as “normal.” Social expectations framed the ground work as to what the relationship between Ennis and Jack would or would not become.

Courtship and Homosexuality. When Ennis and Jack are coupled together in the summer of 1963 to herd sheep on Brokeback Mountain, neither are expecting that a love affair will begin. The conversation between the two is at first strained and limited just as two cowboys would interact with one another. But things quickly change as they both discover that they enjoy one another’s company and share their backgrounds and how they grew up. Ennis and Jack longed to keep their conversation going. As Annie Proulx writes, they kept “tossing sticks on the fire to keep the talk going, talking about horses and rodeo and roughstock events” (260). They discussed their likes, interests and both shared the same dream to someday

each own their own “small spread” (Proulx 256). When a man and woman first meet, these are some of the very same conversations that they have. They are trying to get to know one another to see if they share common interests just as Ennis and Jack were doing. The two “were respecting of each other’s opinions” thus showing another prerequisite that a relationship must have (Proulx 260). Ennis and Jack share sexual relations after they have gotten to a certain familiarity within their relationship just as man and woman do. Upon their departure from Brokeback Mountain after their summer job is over, both are very upset, but neither are able to show their sadness in the public setting the two were now in after having left the security of the mountain. Ennis, the quieter of the two, had the feeling that “someone was pulling his guts out hand over hand” after they had gone their separate ways (Proulx 264). The two discover that they have a “forbidden” attraction to one another, but this comes after they have gotten to know each other. Their love affair starts with a base that was provided by the isolation of Brokeback Mountain. The openness and flow of conversation would not have been possible in an arena of onlookers who would have taken this genuine attraction as something sinister because it was occurring between two men. Now that Ennis and Jack have left Brokeback Mountain let’s, look to the community’s role in contributing to the “forbidden” love between Ennis and Jack.

Homosexuality and the Community. The community and lack of support or even acknowledgement of homosexual relationships play a crucial role in the isolation that both Ennis and Jack have to experience as gay men. In an essay written by Ramona Faith Oswald and Linda S. Culton on rural gay life, Culton states that she was always “aware” that gay people existed in her rural home town but she was “taught” to never “acknowledge” them (72). If a whole community of people is being disregarded, then what kind of support system could have existed for Ennis and Jack to turn to when trying to accept and cope with a sexuality that society did not agree with? Society did not accept homosexuality because it was believed that this would destabilize the culture as a whole; therefore, “sanctions” were used to eject homosexual behaviors (Oswald & Culton 72). This type of treatment forced homosexuals to remain secretive and live closed off lives because they feared the dire repercussions that would follow if they were outwardly gay. This defense mechanism is used to sustain the relationship between Ennis and Jack for they were never affectionate while prying eyes were near; rather they secluded themselves in rented hotel rooms and the wilderness. Jack makes repeated attempts to try and convince Ennis that they can go to Mexico and be together, where homosexuality is presumably more accepted. But only knowing what he has been surrounded with his entire life, Ennis does not see them ever being able to live life openly without fear, hostility and danger. What they do agree on is that “it [homosexual relationships] don’t happen in Wyoming” and Jack suggests that perhaps it is accepted in more urban places like Denver (Proulx 271). Masculinity and roughness were instilled into the men of Wyoming, and it was thought that one could not be gay and a cowboy or “real” man at the same time. With no support system for gay men and homosexual relationships, men like Ennis and Jack had no choice but to try and force themselves into what rural Wyoming society thought they should be which is rugged men with tough jobs accompanied by a wife and children.

Marriage and Conformity. After Ennis and Jack leave Brokeback Mountain, they do not see each other or have any contact for four years. Within that time both men try and conform to what society wants them to be. Jack continues on the rough rodeo circuit which can be viewed as a “real” man’s job because it is so dangerous, while Ennis moves from job to job as a ranch hand who works long rough hours. It seems both have something to prove by holding masculine type jobs. They both take their conformity a step farther when trying to adhere to society by marrying women and having children. In order to lessen the guilt or wrong doing that they feel for loving a man, Ennis says to Jack “I’m not no queer” and Jack quickly responds “me neither” (Proulx 262).

Even though the two are clearly in a homosexual relationship, neither man is comfortable with defining their relationship because society has deemed it “forbidden.” What is not forbidden is sex between a man and woman. Ennis says to Jack “I like doin it with women” but “ain’t nothing like this” (Proulx 268). The sexual encounters between Ennis and his wife lack any intimacy. To have sex Ennis rolls his wife on to her stomach and “did quickly what she hated” (Proulx 264-65). This can be taken one of two ways, one way is that Ennis refuses to acknowledge his wife while having intercourse or that he rolls her over to have anal sex with her. Either way there is no love being shared between the two. It is as if Ennis is just going through the motions as abruptly as he can, with no real romantic feelings towards his wife. He is having sex with a woman because society says he should. In the essay “They’re Bi Shepherds, Not Gay Cowboys: The Misframing of *Brokeback Mountain*,” Harry Brod states the “main characters are shown to be bisexual.” He bases this claim on the fact that the “heterosexual sex scenes” are just as “explicit” as the “homosexual ones” (252). One cannot base the sexual preference of Ennis and Jack on how explicit the different sex scenes are. Ennis and Jack long to be together whenever they are apart and yearn for one another even before they separate knowing that they will not see each other for an extended period of time. When Ennis’s wife asks him to use “rubbers,” he refuses saying “he would be happy to leave her alone” (Proulx 271). Clearly this shows that Ennis is quite content without having a sexual connection to his wife; this seems like quite the opposite reaction of a heterosexual or bisexual male. These men do not yearn for their wives; they are simply married as a front to cover up that they are in fact gay. Ennis and Jack cannot “quit” one another but Jack would readily leave his wife for Ennis and Ennis can just as easily give up sex with his wife. If these two men are bisexual, they are certainly not bisexual with their wives.

Ennis and Jack had no community support or the support of other gay men because the society in which they lived would not allow it. But the isolation that they felt did not start as young adults; it began much earlier than that as adolescents and stemmed from the relationships or lack thereof with their fathers.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Parents are their children’s first teachers, and the only teachers that will continue to influence their ways of thinking and decisions well into their adulthood. Ennis and

Jack both come from fathers that are abusive and that hold a hyper masculine mentality that is thrust upon them as young children. The two are never accepted by their fathers, thus leading them to believe that they will never be accepted for who they truly are by others. This also leads them to believe that the love that they share will also never be accepted. The excessive masculine behavior, lack of love, support and acceptance injures Ennis and Jack and the scars stay with them into their adult lives. Viewing the behavior of hyper masculine fathers and applying it to the upbringing of Ennis and Jack will help to show the psychological effects that it has on the two men and how this laid the ground work for them never being able to accept what their relationship truly was. Another aspect that will be looked at to help us better understand why the love between Ennis and Jack was thought of as “forbidden” is the difference between Natural Law and The Laws of Natural, which are two very different concepts even though they sound very similar.

Hyper Masculine Traits. In an article written by Desi Guerrero on hyper masculinity, it is stated that “conceptualized hyper masculinity is a man’s tendency to adhere to a rigid gender role script” (137). This gender role is dominating in nature. Hyper masculine men possess a macho mentality and the feeling that they need to belittle anything that does not meet their rugged standards. Guerrero also states that men who suffer from a hyper masculine persona also lack in showing and receiving affection and love. They also do not have a high threshold for mistakes, thus leading to a deficiency in showing empathy (138). Those that are in constant contact with males that have a hyper masculine mentality such as children and spouses are often abused by these men (Guerrero 138). It is also thought that children who are living without their father in the household also suffer from “sadness” “loneliness” and isolation; these feelings are then harbored and will stay with a child into adolescence, then following them into adulthood (Fitzgibbons 37). Although Ennis and Jack were raised in completely different households, their fathers both carried the traits of a hyper masculine male and because of this, both men had a very troubled and lonely childhood. Looking at the father-son relationships between Ennis and Jack is pivotal in understanding why these men could not allow themselves to give in to what they wanted most and that was to just be truly together.

Hyper Masculine Fathers and Their Relationships with Their Sons. Ennis’s father is clearly portrayed in *Brokeback Mountain* as a man that suffers from a phobia in regard to homosexual relationships. At a the tender age of nine Ennis is taught the harsh and very real lesson that homosexuals are wrong and do not have the right to even live if that is the type life they choose to live. Ennis’s father takes him to see a presumed gay man that has been murdered. Ennis says to Jack “They’d took a tire iron to him, spurred him up, drug him around by his dick until it pulled off, just a bloody pulp” (Proulx 270). Ennis’s father wanted him to see firsthand what happens to gay men and tells Jack that if his father saw them together intimately his father would not hesitate to “go get his tire iron” and use it on him (his own son). If Ennis believes that his own father would kill him if he knew that Ennis was gay, then what would stop anyone else from trying to kill him because of his sexuality? Ennis never had a loving accepting relationship with his father and although both of Ennis’s parents die in a car accident later in adolescence, Ennis is never able to get over the fact that being gay can

potentially be a death sentence. This is always in the back of his mind, and he can never give in completely to Jack no matter how strong the love is between the two of them.

Jack's father feels his son is his rival. It seems as though his father is jealous of his son from a very young age. Jack tells Ennis that at the age of three or four he does not make it to the bathroom in time and urinates on the toilet. He then describes the beating he suffered saying "Christ, he licked the stuffin out a me, knocked me down on the bathroom floor, whipped me with his belt" (Proulx 282). He was beaten so badly that Jack felt like his father was "killin" him (Proulx 282). But the punishment did not stop there; his father then proceeds to urinate all over the beaten body of young Jack who is then forced to clean it up. During this episode Jack and his father notice a physical difference between the two, with Jack being circumcised and his father not. This difference made Jack's father jealous of him thus viewing him as a rival rather than a son. The adversarial treatment becomes more apparent as Jack gets older. Jack's father is "a pretty well known bullrider" and Jack chooses to follow in his father's footsteps thinking this would please him (Proulx 260). But Jack's decision has the opposite effect, for Jack's father shuns him. Jack tells Ennis that his father "kept his secrets to himself" and never helped or encouraged Jack in fear that his son would be more successful than he was (Proulx 260).

Homosexuality: Natural Law vs. The Laws of Nature. Psychologically both Ennis and Jack seem torn between Natural Law and the Laws of Nature. Natural Law states that everyone regardless of their gender, race, age or sexual preference is entitled to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" which is stated in the Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson (MacKinnon 101). These three elements are said to be "rights" because they do not need to be granted by someone; rather they are birth rights (MacKinnon 101). Ennis and Jack continue to see each other because it makes them feel a happiness that is only felt when they are together. Jack tells Ennis that their affair is "nobody's business but our own" (Proulx 262). He feels that they have the right to be happy and seek out what makes them happy, even though it must be kept between the two of them. If Ennis and Jack did not believe in concepts like Natural Law, then they would have never sought out their happiness because of The Laws of Nature. The Laws of Nature state that same sex relationships are unnatural, wrong, and "forbidden" (MacKinnon 216). It is thought that being homosexual goes against The Laws of Nature because only a man and woman can procreate thus being a normal relationship. Because homosexual couples cannot reproduce (through traditional methods), then homosexuality stunts the progression of the human species, thus going against The Laws of Nature (MacKinnon 216). Ennis and Jack are torn between their right to be happy and the prejudice behaviors toward gay men.

Ennis and Jack both experience abuses at the hands of their masculine fathers and were never quite able to get over these abuses so that they could live life according to what they wanted. The psychological effects of a troubled childhood and upbringing stayed with Ennis and Jack long into adulthood. Because the tribulations that they experienced as children went uncorrected and untreated, Ennis and Jack never learned to communicate and to trust themselves. This leads Ennis "to build walls

of protection around himself to avoid closeness and to avoid the pain of loss" (Rose & Urschel 248). And the psychological abuse leads Jack to continually long for acceptance and love through other men when Ennis is not available. Being taught that homosexuality was "forbidden" and could potentially lead to bodily harm or death, Ennis and Jack are never able to accept fully homosexuality or themselves for that matter.

CONSEQUENCES AND FEARS OF BEING GAY

The greatest fear that Ennis held about being gay was that one of its consequences was death. Jack may have not seen a bloodied corpse as a young boy, but he was also too aware of the consequences of being gay in Wyoming. Examining the consequences and fears of being outwardly gay will help to show what prevented Ennis and Jack from being together. Although this story is fictional there are many men who have suffered from hate crimes and death because of their sexuality. The Matthew Shepard story is one such case. Shepard was murdered because of his sexuality in Laramie, Wyoming. The threat of violence, mistreatment, and potential death hinders the relationship between Ennis and Jack, thus creating the notion that gay love is "forbidden."

Fear of Harm and Death. From the age of nine Ennis knows that being gay can equal death, and in a conversation that he has with Jack he states that if their emotions get the better of them "in the wrong place" that they will be "dead" (Proulx 269). He continues to say "there's no reigns on this one" and that it "scares the piss" out of him (Proulx 269). Ennis knows that there are no safeguards to protect him or Jack, and if they choose to be together openly, then those that feel that homosexuality is wrong and "forbidden" can injure them or even worse kill them without any repercussions. If there are not any repercussions, then what is to stop a macho, hyper masculine thinking cowboy from beating or killing Ennis or Jack just because they feel threatened by a gay male? Ennis, Jack and the rest of the hidden gay community had no public support. Crimes against African Americans and women were also not supported at one time, but eventually groups of people banded together and demanded fair treatment thus providing them with a community that would listen to their out cries and support their causes. Ennis and Jack did not have this luxury in Signal, Wyoming. There was no room or allotment for gay men in Wyoming, and the homophobic mindset that Ennis and Jack felt from the 1960's to the 1980's was still very evident well into the 1990's with the true account of a young man that was slain because of sexual preference.

The Slaying of Matthew Shepard. On October 6, 1998 Matthew Shepard, a student from the University of Wyoming, stopped in at a local bar for a drink. Also in the bar were two men that saw Matthew as prey and a threat. Viewing Matthew Shepard as a threat because of his sexuality and not a person, they took him to a remote area on the outskirts of town and "tied his hands behind him." He was then "beaten, pistol-whipped" and left "unconscious" (Loffreda 16). Matthew's face and head were mangled after receiving "18 blows from a three-pound Smith & Wesson .357 magnum" (Loffreda 17). Matthew never regained consciousness and died 5 days later in a Colorado hospital (Loffreda 17). This particular hate crime did not go unnoticed to say the least. It was a national news story that attracted the attention of the nation and

Wyoming. Both of Matthew's assailants did not go unpunished, but both men made deals to avoid the very likely death penalty in exchange for two life term consecutive sentences (Loffreda 102). This story is not one of what could potentially happen in the state of Wyoming; it actually did happen. The fears that Ennis and Jack had were very real and with no awareness for the gay community or support, who was going to protect them? No one was there for Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. Had there been, then perhaps the unnecessary death of an innocent young man may have never occurred.

The Fatal End. At the end of *Brokeback Mountain*, Ennis's worst fears come true. Just as Matthew Shepard suffered from a hate crime, Jack suffers the same fate. Jack was always more needy than Ennis was, and he longed for male companionship in the long periods of time that Ennis and Jack spent away from each other. Although Jack was not outwardly gay he did have more than one lover which made him more susceptible to the public becoming aware that he was gay. This behavior led to Jack's death. It is stated that a "tire blew up" and this is what caused his death but Ennis knew better and thought "they got him with the tire iron" (Proulx 279). Jack suffered the same type of death that Ennis had seen as a young boy, thus instilling the thought that gay love was "forbidden." It was "forbidden" as a boy and it was also "forbidden" as a man.

The fears and consequences of being gay in a rural area like Wyoming are brutal and real. Homosexuality was not accepted in Ennis's and Jack's time, and it was not accepted in Matthew Shepard's time either. It took a violent event that made headline news to spark an interest to change the views on homosexuals in Wyoming and other rural places. Ennis was not willing to risk death to be with Jack completely, and he also did not want to be the one to set an example. He lived with the pain that came with not being able to be with Jack completely. Jack needed to feel that connection with someone and had other men to fill Ennis's place, but he paid dearly with his life.

CONCLUSION

"Brokeback Mountain" is a sad love story between two men that ends in tragedy for both characters. It ends in tragedy for Jack because he is murdered, and it also ends in tragedy for Ennis because he has lost the only person he has ever loved romantically. The loss of Jack will also stunt the further growth of Ennis's ability to love. With nearly two thousand hate crimes in the United States alone, one may wonder how many Enniss and Jacks there are out there (Harris 816). Males of all ages have had to live with repressed feelings because they have been taught it is "forbidden" and wrong to love another man. Thus, they were never allowed to live their lives fully and have always had to worry about the repercussions of their actions. The United States has made some major progress in the way of equality for homosexuals. At one time homosexuals did not have the rights to freedom of speech and association, liberty, and equal treatment in court, as other Americans had. But that has changed, and homosexuals are protected in many areas such as discrimination in the work place. If they are harassed verbally or physically assaulted, the same punishments of these assailants (if convicted) are the same as they would be if they attacked a heterosexual man or woman (Harris 789). One major right

homosexual couples continue to fight for is the right to legally marry, and in a few states they have been granted the right of civil unions.

These justices were not present when Ennis and Jack first met in 1963. For Ennis and Jack the notion that someday there would be gay right movements, communities that support homosexuals and that they would be protected by government laws would have seemed impossible to them. Although the United States is more accepting and understanding towards the gay community, the mind sets of many individuals have not changed. Matthew Shepard was murdered in 1998, and Jack's death occurred in 1983. The Gay Right Movements began in the late 1960's and yet these hate crimes still occurred. This shows that judicial rights and laws have not prevented all of the abuses that homosexuals face. The heterosexual and homosexual communities are not yet fully living in harmony. But there is no law that can force one group of people to accept another; this has to come from within. This starts with men like Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist recognizing that it is okay to be gay and that loving a man is not a "forbidden love." Once gay couples can embrace who they are, the public needs to realize "different" does not mean wrong, but rather "different" stands for diversity. Whether someone is black, white, man, woman, heterosexual or homosexual, we are all humans with no particular group being better than the other. Accepting that being "different" makes us unique is the key because no one should be punished for being who they are.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Jessica Baldwin is senior, graduating this May with a Bachelor's in English. She is a full time wife and student and the mother of three beautiful children. Her love affair with books and writing began at an early age and continues to grow. She spends her free time reading, studying, and chasing down her very active two-year old son.

Adam Diaz

Adam Diaz, a senior at PNC, will graduate with a Bachelors in Liberal Studies in the summer of 2011. His passion for storytelling lead him to writing at a very young age, and he credits his parents for nurturing his creativity throughout his life. Adam hopes to pursue a career in writing after graduation, and is grateful for the wonderful people he has been lucky enough to be surrounded by in school and life.

Jennifer Evan

Jennifer Evan will be graduating this May at the age of 20 with a Bachelors of Liberal Studies degree with a Pre-Medicine concentration. She will be applying to medical schools this fall and hopes to study neuroscience and physiology. Her interests include painting landscapes and still lifes, learning languages, and traveling. She views the three years she has spent at PNC pursuing her undergraduate degree as meaningful and extremely valuable to her as she continues her education. The people she has met here and opportunities she has been given continue to influence her life in a positive way, which she is both grateful and appreciative for.

Amanda Elzbieciak

Amanda, a junior at PNC, is currently working on earning her BLS degree with a minor in Computer and Information Technology, although her English professors may yet persuade her to become an English major. She has a passion for creative writing: poetry since the fourth grade, fiction since eighth, and nonfiction since last semester. Amanda is a member of the PNC English Club where her role, running the club's website, has earned her the nickname Webmaster.

Christina Fall

Christina Fall is an English Major and member of the Sigma Tau Delta. She loves to write and has been doing so since she was invited to participate in a Writer's Workshop in third grade at Kingsford Heights Elementary School. This is the first year she has entered into the Portals contest and is pleased to see that her writing is appreciated.

Brittany Foltz

Brittany Foltz is currently a junior at PNC with the hopes of graduating with an English degree. While she's not practicing her prose, she's constantly trying to get better at art and hopes one glorious day she can become a writer and illustrator for

Dungeons and Dragons or any kind of fantasy medium. Most of her inspiration comes from her fiancé, Alex, and in things like anime, music, video games, and novels. She resides in Michigan City where she milks cows on her parent's dairy farm.

Dave Hunt

Dave Hunt is a junior at PNC majoring in English. He has lived in Chesterton all his life, and graduated from Chesterton High School in 2006. Reading and writing have always been interests of his, but he did not start writing regularly until enrolling in a creative writing course in 2010. He enjoys writing fiction and the occasional poem. Aside from writing, his passions are music, cooking, and growing food. He is currently working on a novel and a collection of short stories.

Hilary Jordan

Hilary Jordan was born and raised in Indiana by her loving parents Dan and Lynne, along with her younger sister Miranda. Hilary is currently a junior at PNC, and will graduate in spring 2012 with a BA in English. Her future plans include attending graduate school to earn a degree in Library Science, and pursuing a career as a children's librarian. Her greatest joy comes from tending to her many animals, which include ducks, chickens, and a very fluffy, gentle natured Golden Retriever named Sophie.

Jennifer Metyko

Jen graduated from La Porte High School in 2009 and is currently working on earning her bachelor's degree in Secondary English Education, taking classes both at PNC and Purdue Calumet. She lives at home with her parents, sister, German shepherd, tabby cat, and betta fish, Meeko. Jen has loved reading and writing of all types for as long as she can remember, so much in fact that she plans to make a career out of it. After working for Dr. Jerry Holt as a student assistant for the Department of English and Modern Languages, she found that the English Department is right where she belongs, and that she will tackle dreams like scuba diving in Australia and finding the end of a rainbow when time (and possibilities) allow.

Dana Miller

Dana Miller is a 29 year old devoted mother. She has a passion for horses and enjoys spending time with her family and friends. Her major is currently undecided but she will be pursuing an education within the science field.

Nichole Murphy

Nichole Murphy is a senior at Purdue North Central, and will graduate in the Spring of 2012 with a bachelor's degree in English. Upon taking Professor Mellin's "Intro to Literature" class she was convinced that she had found her calling and changed her major from Business to English. She feels that this was the best decision that she

has made in her academic career, as her admiration for literature continues to grow with everything she reads and writes. Nichole lives in Valparaiso Indiana with her family, and to no surprise spends her free time reading and writing.

Christi Strom

Christi Strom is a freshman studying for her bachelors degree in Business/ Accounting. She lives in Valparaiso with her husband of nearly 10 years and their 3 amazing children. While a math and science gal at heart, Christi has always enjoyed writing and has an unusual love for research. In what little free time she has around her full time studies and taking care of her family, Christi enjoys reading, crafting, cooking, hunting down a bargain and baking cupcakes for her small business.

Frederick Tressler

Fred is a lifelong Valparaiso resident and long-time steelworker. After a motorcycle trip to Alaska in 2008 he became interested in writing about his cycling adventures. Recognizing the need to upgrade his skills, he enrolled at PNC in spring of 2009. Currently, he is a half-time student, preparing for a new chapter in life, post-steel mill. During a second ride to Alaska that will take place this July, he will utilize some of the tools acquired at PNC, such as his blog which was a class assignment in Intro to Creative Writing.

Writing and Art Contest Winners—2010-2011

Category One: Personal Essay

Elyse Winter ----- Caite and Disney (1st)
Christina Fall ----- Food Fight (2nd)
Hilary Jordan ----- Seasons of Love (3rd)

Category Two: English Composition Research Essay

Dana Miller ----- River of Blood (1st)
Christi Strom ----- The True Cost of Organics (2nd)
Jennifer Metyko----- The Power of Her Significance, the Significance of Her Power: An Analysis of Vladimir Nabakov's *Lolita* (3rd)

Category Three: Campus-Wide Research Essay

Jennifer Evan ----- The Ecuadorian Ethnicity Today (1st)
Frederick Tressler----- Mainstreaming Hearing-Impaired Children (2nd)
Jennifer Evan ----- Salvia: Still Legal, But Is It Safe? (3rd)

Short Fiction

Dave Hunt ----- Time Away from Home (1st)
Jessica Baldwin ----- Second Life (2nd)
Adam Diaz----- The Wolf and the Hawk (3rd)

The John J. Pappas Literary Essay Award

Heather Bell ----- *Persuasion*: The Correlation between Character and Appearance (1st)
Sarah Lasser ----- Social Isolation Leads to Murder in Glaspell's *Trifles*
Nichole Murphy----- "A Forbidden Love on Brokeback Mountain" (3rd)
Sharon Glaze ----- Privacy Issues in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (3rd)

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